

# THIS QUARTER

Edited & Published by EDWARD W. TITUS

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for January-February-March 1930

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*Printed in France.*

# THIS QUARTER

January - February - March 1930

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## EDITORIALLY :

### THIS QUARTER'S POETRY PRIZE OF 2,500 FRANCS

**to be awarded to the ablest young  
English Poet whose work has appeared  
in This Quarter.**

*In the October-November-December issue of THIS QUARTER we published a preliminary announcement of an English poetry prize, the conditions of which we now definitely announce as follows:*

#### 1

*The prize will be known as the Edward W. Titus English poetry prize. It will be paid annually for at least three years, at the rate of 2500 Francs per annum.*

#### 2

*The award will be made by THIS QUARTER's editorial committee.*

#### 3

*The prize winner must be a native of the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Colonies or Dominions, and have contributed to at least one issue of THIS QUARTER during the previous year.*

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4

*In making the award the poet's whole output may be taken into consideration, not merely his particular contribution appearing in THIS QUARTER.*

5

*The award may be made to a young poet not yet known to the public or to one whose work has been overlooked.*

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In creating this prize the editor wishes to reciprocate the American poetry prize established by Mr. Richard Aldington, the English poet, novelist and essayist. Since the publication in the last issue of THIS QUARTER of the terms of the American poetry prize its value, thanks to Mr. Aldington's personal efforts to enlist public-spirited support, has been increased to 10,000 Francs. THIS QUARTER is hopeful that there may be found one or more patrons and lovers of poetry in the United Kingdom who will come forward with offers to increase the English poetry prize to an equal amount.

Combining a spirit of sportsmanship with a great love for poetry, Mr. William Van Wyck, an American man of letters resident in Europe, whose translation of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales into contemporary English is to be published shortly by Messrs. Covici-Friede of New York City, has offered us an additional prize of 2500 Francs to be awarded to the abler of the winners of the American and English poetry prizes. There will be a special committee to decide the respective merits of the two winners.

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### A SPAN OF HISTORY

It is well known that Benjamin Franklin had owned a small printing plant at Passy. Moved by an inveterate penchant for Frankliniana, whenever leisure permitted, and sometimes when it had not, we would go in search of Franklin Passy imprints. Never once in a period of years did we succeed in glimpsing a single specimen from his press. All but ready to abandon hope of finding one, and



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beginning to doubt, not Franklin's long residence in France, his political, social, scientific and amative activities, but, although still with much reluctance, his printing experience during that period, we received one morning in our book-bestrewn study a neighboring bookseller, who had come to ask if we were interested in *un petit bouquin sorti de l'imprimerie de Benjamin Franklin*. Our editorial throat became dry, and we began to shake in our Moroccan slippers. "We did not know whether the item would interest us, but would consent to examine it"—was approximately what we answered, not without inner faintness. To our great disappointment, the visitor had not the book on his person, but promised to bring it up the next morning. We spent a sleepless night in mortal fear lest our friend dispose of the *bouquin* elsewhere in the age-long interval. We might have spared ourselves apprehension, since the celestial messenger duly reappeared the following morning, and the slender pamphlet is now safely in our bookcase under lock and key. This happened after the Hon. Myron Herrick had gone from us to join the ranks of all other departed American ambassadors, of whom the protean Benjamin Franklin is the most illustrious and the first. Followed several public celebrations in honor of Franklin's memory, then the appointment and arrival of the Hon. Walter E. Edge, to assume the duties of the Ambassadorship in Paris. Finally there reached our desk a copy of Bernard Fay's *Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times*.

What a fascinating book it proved to be, from cover to cover! What enthusiasm and what wealth of good humour, —never for once lagging, never for once ruffled, throughout its 500 odd pages,—had gone into the making of this book! Not even its whimsical English that occasionally arrested the attention could dampen the pleasure it yielded in the reading; it may even have added zest to the occupation. (1)

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(1) It does not appear clearly from Mr. Fay's preface to the book whether he had written it originally in English and had it subsequently revised by Mr. Bravig Imbs or whether the latter had translated it from the French. In either case, the idiomatic quaintness encountered in numerous instances is easily accounted for by the fact that Mr. Imbs, who had for so long nourished himself on the aliment supplied by Miss Gertrude Stein, must still be suffering not a little from linguistic indigestion.

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"Franklin, the Apostle of Modern Times!"—What an irresistible invitation to rumination and—garrulousness... Benjamin Franklin, arriving on his precarious mission at Nantes, the 5th December, 1776, at one end of the stretch, Senator Edge, welcomed on his in December, 1929, at the other. The mind's eye seeks to span the touching centuries, the eighteenth, nineteenth and the twentieth. One is tempted to point parallels, draw comparisons between that time and this,—to wonder: is it better, is it worse? And the values? And the transvaluation, if any there has been, of values? How do they weigh out in the balance of human achievement? And, in their turn, human worth, human dignity, and the scope for their full play and unfolding, or man's creative imagination and the expression thereof, —what about *them*, from Franklin's day to this? Not omitting the great god Progress,—since we are Moderns. Has he marked a furlong of advance, or a mile, or has he covered thousands of miles, merely groping and straying through the mazes and impenetrable mists of space upon space?

But, above all, being the slaves to slogans which we receive and embrace as ancient wisdom, what about culture and civilization and ideals? And War? Proclaiming it as the great resolute, unfearing champion and saviour of civilization, and of Democracy which is a Monarchy, and of a Democracy which is not a Monarchy, we must, of course, have war! On the other hand there is Peace. She is the loyal nurse and handmaiden of civilization and democracy: Hence we must have Peace! Hot, cold and lukewarm—all for the sake of civilization's eyes of blue!



Ours has been a civilization dynamic rather than evolutionary. As such it touches the periphery rather than the core of life; as such it is as likely to be destructive as constructive, and on the constructive side it does not always produce blessings that endure. We sing well in chorus, and the chorus membership has increased prodigiously, but as soloists, we are poor performers. Our falsetto voices may at any moment threaten destruction

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to the choral harmony, but its volume lacks power to drown their stridency. Such as it is, modern civilized life leans backward to material realities rather than forward to the spiritual or ethical, which latter must be kept always in full flow that civilization may so flourish as to smother every trace of lingering barbarism. When we say modern civilization, we mean the contemporary as well as that of the preceding two centuries. There are no striking contrasts between them; there are only differences. That great highway of civilization carries its traffic now as then, communally and nationally, but it absorbs at a greater rate than previously the lanes and byways of warmer and richer individual development. The eaves still catch the pluvial waters, but they are diverted in an infinitely greater measure than before to feed the reservoirs of the nation.

It would lead too far to more than suggest a few of the existing differences and resemblances:

Let one of the exhibits be this charming incident recounted by Fay: At a meeting of the Académie Française which Franklin frequently attended, he once had met Voltaire, and they kissed each other on both cheeks *à la française*. Nowadays, who knows, this same Voltaire, might, except by special dispensation, be refused entrance to American shores under the omnibus clause of moral turpitude on the grounds of irreligion, immorality, or what not, as only recently his great satire *Candide* was denied admission by the *customs* authorities.

Of the cultural or social amenities of his day many are no longer even conceivable; others we still have with us. Very insecure, indeed, would Franklin's political status be today were it to be discovered that from conviviality of his nature he wrote little musical catches for his friends, such as: "Then toss off your glasses, and scorn the dull asses." On the other hand it might not much impair his position had he been today the actor in another little occurrence which Mr. Fay fails to give us. It is this: "Madame de Créquy, whose hand was kissed by Louis XVI, and who lived to receive the same homage from the Emperor Napoleon, relates, that she was one day invited to meet the celebrated American at dinner, the post of honor next to him being reserved for her... She says she revenged herself by not speaking a word to him during the meal, but amused herself in observing his manners...



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She was horrified in observing him break several eggs into a glass, mix them up with butter, pepper and salt, and eat the unsightly mess with a spoon." (2)

Certainly Franklin travelled not by steamer; he knew not the palatial Pullman, nor the speedy motor car. The amphibious plane spanned not continents in his day. Hotels had no dazzling bathrooms with each sleeping chamber. Roentgen rays did not reveal to him his bony structure. 606 was not known as a cure for the *morbis gallicus*. Nor did he participate in the multitude of, shall we say, other achievements that are the pride of our time but marked not his. The absence and inexperience of none of these things appear to have disqualified him from the Hall of Fame. Instead of goose-quills which he had sold in his Philadelphia shop, he would, were he with us today, be selling probably Waterman's fountain pens; instead of *Poor Richard*,—the *World's Almanach* or the *American Caravan* or *This Quarter*. Would that have added a fraction of a cubit to his stature?

To say flatteringly or facetiously, as Mr. Fay does, that Franklin was the first bourgeois in the world, or its first Rotarian is neither here nor there, for if now we have the bourgeois, the philistine, the rotarian or babbits, there were the Pharisees in biblical days, and the Tartuffes in Molière's: *a rose is a rose is a rose*.

Mr. Fay stresses the fact that during the Franklinian period "the acquisition of knowledge, particularly of the

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(2) Relating, not without a measure of exultation, how Franklin had been lionized on all sides in France, the many tributes of admiration he had received, the gifts that had been showered upon him by illustrious personages, the countless portraits that had been made of him, Mr. Fay mentions one in particular, presented by Louis XVI,—in this instance not to Franklin but to the Countess de Polignac, his friend,—which, if intended as a compliment, could not but be considered as a very doubtful one. It was nothing more or less than the gift of "a splendid chamber pot with Franklin's spectacled face painted on the bottom."

Another version, somewhat more elegant but no less amusing of the same incident that would suggest a less flattering construction, abstracted from "*Parisian sights and French Principles, seen through American spectacles*," 1853, is as follows: "Franklin was no favorite with the old noblesse. Louis XVI detested him, and to express his dislike, sent one of his lady admirers a certain nameless domestic utensil of the purest Sèvres, in the bottom of which was his portrait and the well-known motto: *Eripuit Coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis*." This same publication is the source also of the dinner incident described by Madame de Créquy.



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sciences, was all the rage." No one will deny that the same condition prevails in America at the present day. From recent reports it appears that Columbia University alone carries an enrollment of 50,000 students. We know, on the other hand, that Franklin managed by personal application to acquire the French, Spanish, Italian and Latin languages, and became one of the world's acclaimed savants. Mr. Fay points out that "In the eighteenth century a cultivated man could do without his shirt but not without his Latin quotations." Franklin was a great man, but by no means a prodigy. In classical accomplishments he had many superiors amongst his contemporaries. We should not like—and this we say with all due deference—to be asked to point out more than a very small number of individuals in America today, graced with the same universal accomplishments as Franklin's. It is, therefore not unfair to ask, why an educational system which possesses the most magnificent facilities and most complete equipment in the world cannot produce men as accomplished and as great? Serenity, contemplation, wisdom, patience and perseverance are qualities which contemporary civilization fails to foster.

On a preceding page we spoke in passing of the material realities in present American life as opposed to the spiritual and moral, and it strikes us only as remotely just when we hear it said that modern America is sunk ear-deep in materialism. The country is not now more materialistic than at any other period since the formation of the republic. Not in the sense of aggravation, but only proportionately to the phenomenal growth of its population, can there be any question of a greater luxuriance in materialistic tendencies. Contrariwise, it would be difficult to deny that amongst the women of America an intensification of these tendencies is manifest. At every turn they obtrude themselves to the most casual observer, and legions of lyrical and chivalrous spell-binders would be powerless to declaim them away or gloss them over. The symptom is, to our view, due to the comparatively recent release of the sluices of economic emancipation of women. Had their economic and concomitant social liberation preceded or been contemporaneous with the abolition of the old order, one might well hesitate to say that materialism of American women would have taken on, would have

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approximated, that exuberance which at present is so alarming. At its worst it might have remained proportionate to that of the male population instead of surpassing it.

It has occurred to us often, when reviewing our ancient reading, that the chief difference which marks off the earliest from the present period in American history lies in the manifest mutation from the early background of practical liberty to a background of morality: a morality not of depth but of superficiality; not of spontaneity but of effort—a strained and straining morality; not a morality which has the soul, love and tolerance for its soil, but one of the mind, error, chicanery and gregarious ill-will. A background of morality which, we fear, must in the long run and at the top turn, produce a lassitude and ineptitude for freedom itself.

(E. W. T.)

# STENDHAL

(A propos of Lucien Leuwen)

by

Paul Valéry

of *The French Academy*

I have just finished reading a Lucien Leuwen which is not quite the same one I loved so much thirty years ago. I have changed and the book has changed. I hasten to add that this new *Leuwen*, which amends, enlarges and improves the first text, first revives and then prolongs the delightful memory of my former reading. Still, I do not disavow my one-time pleasure.



Criticism has at times been a bit harsh towards Jean de Mitty, who was the first to edit *Leuwen*, about 1894. I shall not deny that the text he offered us at that time now seems a deplorable one, abridged and perhaps rather seriously altered, and I am not unaware that Mitty himself may well have provided an opening for severe arraignments that were not confined to his work, but were directed at him personally.

But I myself still feel indebted to him, and I venture to confine my comments at this time to a few words of praise. We had met at the home of Stéphane Mallarmé, where he used to come fairly often on Tuesdays. Leaving these treasured



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gatherings, we would pass down the half-lit rue de Rome and toward the radiant center of Paris, chatting, usually, of Napoleon or of Stendhal.

At the time, I was enthusiastically reading *la Vie d'Henri Brûlard* and the *Souvenirs d'Egotisme*, which I preferred to the celebrated novels, to the *Rouge* and even to the *Chartreuse*. Plots and events were of little interest to me ; I was interested solely in that vital system upon which all events depend, the inner structure and reactions of man ; the only *plot* that interested me was man's inner plot. Mitty was then preparing—or if you like, arranging—the little edition of *Lucien Leuwen*, which he sent me, immediately upon its publication by Dentu. This book afforded me the utmost enjoyment; I was one of the first to read it, and I have praised it on many occasions.



Up until then, I had read nothing on love that had not bored me to excess, or else had seemed ridiculous or pointless. My youth placed love so high or so low, that I found nothing strong enough or true enough, either harsh or tender enough, in the most celebrated works. But in *Leuwen*, the extraordinary delicacy of the portrait of *Madame de Chasteller*, the nobility and depth of feeling of its heroes, the progress of an attachment growing to omnipotence in a sort of silence, and the utter artistry with which the whole was restrained and kept at a point of uncertainty,—all this charmed me and forced me to read and re-read the book. Perhaps I had my reasons for being somewhat personally affected by these indefinable qualities; and yet, I was astounded at being thus affected, for

## PAUL VALERY

I never allowed myself (and rarely do still) to be deceived by a written work to the point of no longer distinguishing clearly between my own feelings and those the writer's craft produces in me. I see the pen, and the one who holds the pen. I am not concerned with, nor do I need his emotions; I demand of him only to acquaint me with his means. But *Lucien Leuwen* worked in me the miracle of a confusion that I abhor...



As for the picture of provincial, Parisian, military, political and parliamentary or electoral life—a charming caricature of the first years of Louis Philippe's reign, a brilliant and lively comedy that at times becomes a vaudeville, just as the *Chartreuse de Parme* sometimes recalls comic opera—it afforded me an amusement illuminated with flashes and ideas.

My impression of the first *Leuwen* was a tender and a vivid one; why, then, should I not show a bit of gratitude to the shade of poor Mitty, to whom I am indebted for a few enchanted hours? I was delighted and touched by the early and imperfect *Leuwen* that he gave me; I shall never again read the questionable text that he prepared; and that is my reason for addressing a few kind words of farewell to the original text, and to its editor.



I had scarcely finished writing (a few lines before) the words vaudeville and comic opera, when it occurred to me that my reader might be shocked. He dislikes, no doubt, the jumbling of literary

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castes; Stendhal, praised by Taine and Nietzsche, Stendhal, almost a philosopher, would, no doubt, be mildly amazed to find himself at such close quarters with men of unpretending wit. But truth and life are confusion; affiliations and relationships that are not surprising are not real...

Do I seem to see, then, a certain path leading from Stendhal, by way of Mérimée and the Musset of *Fantasio*, down, perhaps, to the lesser theaters of the Second Empire, to the princes and plotters of the Meilhacs and Halévys? And this thread probably goes, capriciously, quite far back. (But in the intellectual sphere, all is derived from all else and is universally diffused.)

Stendhal, who was a lover of opera-buffa, must have delighted in Voltaire's shorter tales, those perennial marvels of speed, action and terrible fantasy. In these lively and cruel works, which, thanks to their infernal tempo, succeed in combining satire, opera, ballet, polemics and ideology, these tales which were the joy and the scandal of the close of Louis XV's reign—what agile mind does not detect in these the elegant ancestors of those inevitable comic operas that diverted the last days of the reign of Napoleon III? I never re-read *la Princesse de Babylone*, *Zadig*, *Babouk* and *Candide* without seeming to hear a vague music, a thousand times wittier, more critical and more diabolic, than that of Offenbach or of any of his fellows.

In short, I venture to believe that *Ranuce-Ernest* could have held the boards at the *Variétés* and that *Doctor Dupoirrier* might have held forth at the *Palais-Royal*.



Fortunately, Beyle received from his century the inestimable gift of vivacity. The ponderous and the dull never knew a readier foe. The Classicists and Romanticists, among whom he moved and glittered, spurred on his impulse to precision. He would have been amused (and, at heart, flattered) could he have seen, in a magic crystal, his future as a pundit. He would have seen, in those magic depths, his formulae become theses, his whims turned into principles, his pranks developed into theories, doctrines emanating from himself, and countless commentaries derived from his terse maxims. His favorite themes—Napoleon, Love, Energy and Happiness—have produced volumes of exegesis. Philosophers have tackled the task and scholars have turned their magnifying gaze on the tiniest details of his life, on his scribblings and his tradesmen's bills. A sort of naive and naively esoteric idolatry reveres the name and the relics of this great iconoclast. As usual, his eccentricities have provoked imitation. Everything that represents the contrary of himself, his liberty, his capriciousness, and his taste for opposition, derives from himself alone. Fame moves in a mysterious way her wonders to perform. Fame is always mystic, even the fame of atheists.

*To the devil with this fellow Stendhal!* says the ghost of Stendhal at times, incarnated in some non-conformist reader.



Victim of his father and of grave and worthy persons who either restrain or bore him—the slave, by no means wholly the slave of the ponderous toilers of the Council of State, pillars of the Empire, advisers, reporters and directors, supposed to supply steadily the master's feverish needs and the

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needs of an enormous France, harassed by an always critical situation,—to supply them with their ration of replies, trivial solutions, figures, decisions and precisions—he had watched in closest intimacy, observed, seen through and mocked the follies and the merits of these office-holders. He had observed occasionally their venality and observed constantly their greed for promotion, their consummate and childish scheming, their meticulous futility, their love of verbosity and of authority, the hindrances they created for themselves and for others; their incredible courage in the presence of mountains of documents, columns of figures which crush the spirit without enriching the intellect, and those endless scribblings which give to power the illusion of existence, of competence, of foresight and of activity. To these monsters of toil, stupidity, greediness, aridity, hypocrisy or envy, whose faces, characters and actions he so often has depicted, Beyle always opposes an impeccable young man or a man of keen intelligence. He perceived from his own distastes, and assured himself by personal observation, that real value can be separated from vanities, red-tape, lies, pomposity, and routine. He had remarked that these consequential persons, so indispensably linked up with the proper conduct of affairs are inarticulate and of no avail when facing the unexpected. A nation which does not possess in reserve a few men capable of acting on the spur of the moment is a nation without sinews. All swift movement is a menace to it. A bolt from the blue annihilates it.

One sees easily in reading Beyle that he would have liked to swing great enterprises as a pastime. He created with loving hand men of quick and cleancut decisions, whose instantaneous reactions

are exactly timed to events quite as abrupt and surprising as surprise itself,—ministers or bankers who direct, decide and see through circumstances, combining in their characters the amusing with the profound, mingling subtlety and fitness, giving one the impression that Beyle himself lives within them, plotting or governing with an easy hand beneath their masks, and that, moreover, in creating them he is taking his revenge for not being what they are. Every writer finds compensation as best he can for some irony of fate.

It is true of many men of value, that this very value depends upon the variety of rôles of which they feel themselves capable. Henry Beyle, who might have made an excellent prefect, 1810 model, was none the less a devil of a fellow, always up in arms against everything that was most respectable. Though a sceptic, he believed in love. Though a hot-head, he was none the less a patriot. Though an abstract observer, he was interested (at least strove or pretended to be interested) in painting. He made pretensions to the positive, and yet, created for himself a mystic cult of passion.

Is it possible that the growth of the consciousness of Self and constant introspection may lead one to consider oneself, and in reality to become, many-sided? The mind is multiplied within its possibilities, and detaches itself at each instant from what it has just been, takes in what it has said, veers over to the other side, *answers itself*, and awaits the effect. I find in Stendhal the movement, fire and swift reflexes, the resiliency of tone and the honest cynicism of Diderot and Beaumarchais, those admirable comedians. Knowing oneself is only foreseeing oneself, and foreseeing oneself ends in one's playing a part. Beyle's consciousness



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is a theater, and there is much of the actor in this author. His works abound in speeches for the gallery. His prefaces make curtain-speeches, wink, and indulge in knowing signs for the reader's benefit, seeking to convince him that he is the least stupid among the spectators, that he is in the secret of the farce, and that he alone appreciates all its fine points. "You and I are the only ones here," they say.

This has worked wonders for Stendhal's posthumous success. He makes his reader proud of being his reader.



Beyle cannot refrain from animating his works directly. He burns with the desire to be upon the stage himself; to be always making an entrance; he lavishes false confidences, asides and monologue. He manipulates his puppets himself, and he has organized an exceedingly complete social troupe of them, with their rôles as clearly defined as in the old-time theater. He has his lovers, doting old men, prelates, ambassadors, scholars, republicans and militaries of the Old Guard. These types are more conventionalized than Balzac's, and consequently, are better drawn. He sees their ideas, rather than their thought, their feelings, rather than their motivating energy and their function in society. To him, for example, Napoleon is a *hero*; he is a model of energy, imagination and will-power, a great spirit endowed with a prodigiously clear-seeing intellect, a lover of ideal grandeur, loving power and glory with a passionate and truly Stendhalian love. But Balzac sees in Napoleon the great organizer and the Empire, the Civil Code, the fulfilment and confirmation of the

Revolution and the domination of the forces that went to produce it, the restoration of Society, his legend emerging from history to *invade*, by the popular virtue of the fable, the domain of politics.

Beyle saw in Napoleon the latter's antique lineaments, the Italian side of him, those strongly-drawn characteristics revelatory of Rome and Florence, Caesar and the Condottieri. Balzac sees in him, above all else, the Emperor of the French.

It is apparent that this parallel between Balzac and Stendhal, if one were interested, might be conceived and followed out with a sufficient show of reason. They each treated the same period and dealt with the same social fabric. They are two imaginative observers of the same object...



All of Stendhal's characters have this vice or this virtue in common: they all manifest, or are unable to manifest, according to their rôle or rank, a certain *antipathy* or a certain *sympathy* felt by their prime mover.

The artist seems, at times, dearly to love his pet aversions. We unconsciously love that which we take pleasure in torturing. Stendhal attacks and stigmatizes them, runs them through, or tears them asunder with delight. He returns to the charge, finding boundless enjoyment in ridiculing their stupidity, their baseness and their scheming. In his work, there is no one who is not more or less a target for his satire, no one who is not deceived by others, or himself a deceiver,—perhaps both, as most often happens. Even his favorites are victims of their tender-heartedness, or else are Beauty's dupes.

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It is not exactly clear why Stendhal did not turn to the theater, for which all his talents destined him. Time permitting, one might speculate on this enigma. Doubtless, the hour had not come when comedies and dramas by Henry Beyle would have stood a chance of success.

But this author, who was an actor within, set up a stage in his own mind,—or in his soul, or his brain, (the word is not important; it should serve to designate merely that sort of time-place in which that drama goes on which each witnesses by himself alone,— where what is seen is not clearly distinguished from what is willed or what is done.)

Upon this private stage, he gives a continuous performance of his own Ego. Of his life, his career, his loves and his varied ambitions, he constructs a never-ending drama, his gestures are always to the point, his answers, rejoinders and dialogue coordinated to fit his impulses, his naïvetés, his “fiascos” of various sorts.

Among the characters of this continuous morality play, constantly revived by circumstances, there are several allegorical personages, familiar entities, such as Ideal Beauty, Happiness, Lo-g-ic, Money, and Noble Style... The shade of Bonaparte, the silhouette of the Jesuit, and the puppet of the *most knavish of kings* <sup>(1)</sup>, etc., pass across the stage in turn, to receive the applause or the hisses of the public.

This mimic drama has even a certain *music* of its own. At times one hears in the text the outburst of entirely personal themes, certain locutions, interjections, almost, amounting only to *nervous signals*, the rallying-call of energy, the resurrection of the

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(1) Italics denote quotation from Stendhal; *kings* in English.



*fondest memory*, and the awakening of the will to be once more what one had been, and to desire again what one had once desired...

These are sudden, brief formulae that break the chains of the moment, bring commotion into a dull day, and surge from the being's depths like a call to arms, as though, in the midst of indifferent or overwhelming circumstances, against the consciousness of a shabby or unfortunate situation, the omnipotent bell of personal value were to be heard, the alarm-cry of the single self,—something like the clear note of the trumpet, whose blast, seizing upon the young dragoon drowsing on his mount, caused him to straighten up, when the recruits of his regiment were passing over the Alps to join the reserve troops of the year VIII (2).

The theme of egotistic egoism sounds, under his pen, as though it meant: WE SHALL SEE WHEN THE TIME COMES!...

Another theme is that of the *Nets strung too high*. (3)

Pride spreads them so high that nothing substantial ever becomes entangled in them. Vanity places its trammel in the depths, and always ensnares, on one side or another, some sensible advantage.

The questions, pride and vanity, are essential, when one is concerned with a man who invites the public to watch his show; they are curiously bound up with talent, they arouse it and even engender it, deprave it, or act as its constant guide. It is necessary, therefore, to pause for a moment, in the case of Stendhal, in order to give these questions

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(2) Stendhal was a dragoon, and not a hussar. Moreover, when he crossed the Alps, he was not yet assigned. (M. Arbelet's observation.)

(3) "*Vous tendez vos filets trop haut.*" (Henri Brulard.)

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some attention. The comparative quantities of vanity and pride implicated in a work are *magnitudes* that the chemists of criticism must never cease to search for. They are never without significance.



The least fatuous among illustrious writers, harassed, none the less, by his desire to be read and to stir everlastingly those who read him, Stendhal, despite all his intelligence, despite the pleasure he took in surprising himself, correcting himself, arousing himself from his follies, and in jeering at himself (just as pinching oneself enables one to rally and visualize oneself), was forever torn between his strong desire to please, to attain fame, and his antagonistic mania for being, the pleasure he found in being, himself, acting for himself alone and according to the dictates of self. He felt in his innermost being the spur of literary vanity; but he felt, still deeper, the sharp, weird sting of an uncompromising pride, determined to rely on nothing but itself.

Our talents urge us to make use of them; the rapid and unceasing formation of ideas gives birth to a strange restlessness to produce them. The future work of art ferments in its future author. But this fury would sell our soul to others; this power, when it finally overflows and has free run, nearly always leads us far away from ourselves, drawing into unexpected places our *Self*, which it entangles in a multitude of exhibitions, comparisons and mutual evaluations. There it becomes, in some measure, *an effect of the effect which acts upon a great number of unknowns*. The *known* man tends to become no more than an emanation from the

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indistinct number of unknowns, that is to say, opinion's tool, an absurd public monster, to whom the real man yields bit by bit, and finally conforms.

Thus it is with those blessed ones whom their humility has brought upon the altars, where they now lie, these gilded poor and these incensed lowly, beheld by all.

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We heed the temptations of our powers at the expense of what our hearts contain of most value perhaps; of that which is jealous, wild, incommunicable, and which wills to exist. This naive insular being and this lover of fame (for he is that none the less) at length manage to put up, as best they can, with one identical destiny...

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By what means may we extricate ourselves from this contrariety of two of the greatest instincts of the intellect? — One of them incites us to solicit, compel and seduce minds at hazard; the other jealously recalls us to our solitude and irreducible oddity. One wishes us to seem; the other summons us to be, and to be confirmed in being. It is a conflict between that which is, in man, too human, and that which is not in the least human and has no feeling of likeness. Every strong and pure being feels himself to be something besides a man, refusing and ingenuously dreading to recognize in himself one of the innumerable copies of a repeated species or type. In every person of depth is some hidden virtue that unceasingly engenders a recluse. Such persons experience upon occasion—encountering or remembering other beings—a peculiar

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anguish, which pierces them with a sharp and sudden sensation, causing them to retreat at once into an undefinable personal island. This is a reflex paroxysm of inhumanity, an invincible antipathy that may be carried to the point of madness, like that of a certain emperor who wished all mankind had only one head so that it might be severed with a single blow. But in natures less brutal and more intimate, this very forcible feeling, this obsession of man with man, may generate ideas and works of art. The victim of the evil of not being unique wears himself out inventing that which distinguishes him from others. His mania is making himself singular. Perhaps, that which besets and tortures him is not so much the desire of placing himself above everyone else as it is that of taking a stand apart from, and in some measure beyond, all comparison? "Great" men bring smiles to the faces of certain "incommensurable" men.



Perhaps the enormous "sin"—the metaphysical sin par excellence, that theologians have called by the high-sounding name of *pride* has as its being's root this irritable need of being unique? Furthermore, to continue this reflection, carrying it doubtless a bit too far along the path of the simplest feelings, one would discover, at the bottom of pride, only horror of death; for we are acquainted with death only through others who die, and if we are actually their fellows, we also shall die. Therefore, this horror of death brings forth from its shadows an inexplicably furious desire not to be akin, to be independence itself, the singular being preeminent, that is to say, a god. To refuse kinship,



to refuse kindred, and to refuse to be one of those who, apparently and rationally, are our kinsfolk—this is to refuse to be mortal, and blindly to wish not to be the same essence as those who pass and disappear all about us. The syllogism that led Socrates to his death more surely than did his hemlock, the induction that forms the major premise and the deduction that concludes it, evoke a defence and an obscure revolt of which the cult of self is a readily deduced effect.

This is the direction taken by egotism, when one considers what it may have been at its source. I have, perhaps, gone a bit further than was fitting in the case of Stendhal; what I have just written would be more applicable to Nietzsche, and would be more in place in the margin of *Ecce Homo* than in that of Henri Brûlard. But the greater includes and throws light upon the lesser. The infected *self* only exaggerates and sensitizes frightfully the secret dispositions and profound temptations which are not lacking in the practically normal *self*.

As for the Stendhal type of egotism, it implies faith, a faith in a *Natural-Ego*, toward which culture, civilization and customs are inimical. This Natural-Ego is revealed to us (and no other way is possible) by those reactions of ours which we consider or imagine to be primitive or really spontaneous. The more these reactions seem independent of our social environment and of the educational habits derived from that environment, the more value and authenticity they assume in the eyes of the Egotist.

What strikes, amuses and even fascinates me in this desire of the Egotist for the natural is that it requires and permits a certain *convention*. To distinguish that which is natural from that which is

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conventional, a convention is indispensable. What other way is there of separating *nature* from *culture*? The natural is variable; the spontaneous has quite different sources in everyone. Can it be thought that even love is unpervaded by experience, and that tradition fails to enter into the very transports, fears and complications of thought and feeling that love may engender? Even if I state that *the natural is that which, in one's dispositions and actions, emanates directly from the organism*, by that I mean that there are as many ways of being natural as there are different constitutions or individuals, each of whom would consider the deeds and words of the others far removed from that nature—*which he finds in himself*.

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An observation: To be an *egotist*, and yet to make such casual use of others' works is a combination that may well astound one.

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One can easily see the amusing possibilities of proclaiming, or acknowledging, "nature" and the "natural" as a thesis, as well as in the form of a general theory.

This attractive and ingenuous system, which goes back to Rousseau and reappears whenever the state of civilization causes someone to be more acutely conscious of constraints and laws than of advantages, imparts a feeling of pride to those who re-invent and those who follow the system. It is, simultaneously, a sort of intimate ethics, a rule of conduct in society, a religion of the personality, a

literary bias, and a consequence of that horn-comedian's temperament which I see in Stendhal, and in all those who are given to self-confession. Nothing is more interesting, and nothing, perhaps, is more comical, nothing more stimulating and nothing more unsophisticated, than to make up one's mind to be *oneself*, or to be *genuine*. This great and simple decision is not rare in literature. Examples are plentiful, for the inducements are powerful. An easy method of being *original*—a kindred superstition—and of being so merely by *being*; the assurance of discovering great facilities, the initial stroke of daring once accomplished; freedom to employ the slightest incidents of one's life, the insignificant details that produce *truth*; liberty to make use of immediate language and to create values with trifles usually passed over silently in books: the well-defined charms inherent in a lighting-up of manners which cast into relief what is ordinarily obliterated by and wrapped in shadows,—there are great advantages for you.

Cynicism in works of art usually signifies a certain degree of frustrated ambition. When one is at a loss as to how to create astonishment and survive, one prostitutes oneself, takes out one's *pudenda*, and shows them to the public.

After all, it must be rather nice to surrender to oneself, and, by simply unbuttoning oneself, to give others the sensation of discovering America. Everyone knows what there is to be seen, but it suffices to hint at the gesture, and everyone is moved. Such is the magic of literature.

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Literary Egotism consists, finally, in playing the rôle of *self*, of being more natural than nature itself,

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a bit more oneself than one was a few moments before having the idea. By giving one's impulses or impressions a conscious *agent*, which by dint of differing, of relying upon itself, and especially of *taking notes*, assumes more and more definite form, and *perfects itself* with each work, *according to the progress of the writer's art*, one comes to substitute a fictitious person for oneself, and ends, unconsciously, by taking it for one's model. It should never be forgotten that in this self-observation, there is an infinite degree of arbitrariness...



I should not be astonished if Stendhal had confirmed his egotism by frequenting some of the deliberately original English who were then to be seen in Italy, very busy being eccentric, possessing all the requisite means,—the physical attributes, the boredom, the dispassionate humour, the guineas, the necessary indolence, the prestige of their nation, which they professed to scandalize, knowing well that it does not dislike being shocked. The effect of these *milords* upon him must have been rather stimulating. Consider what he hated most in this world: littleness, economy, the absence of all fantasy, stupid or sordid habits, all the anti-passionate virtues—(terror of opinion, terror of expense, terror of loving what one loves)—that he had observed at close hand, endured and cursed during his childhood, and which had made Grenoble and the entire French province odious to him. He abhors traditions, the small town, local vanity, imposed mediocrity. Whenever he thinks of them, he bristles up and becomes an islander of the island of SELF.



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That belated love of small back-countries, of bell-towers and dead things, which in our time exists, curiously enough, side by side with an excess of novelty, had not yet been discovered. The cult of localities and ancestors had not yet been reinstated, for railroads and the disturbing effects of modern economics had not yet caused certain ones to feel a more or less profound need of more or less real roots, along with the nostalgia for an almost vegetable condition, a condition which those who have experienced it have not always excessively appreciated.



Stendhal is one of those men whom childhood impressions have most clearly formed, equipped and definitely marked out. All during life, he will judge according to the memories of Beyle the young man, and his judgments will be immediately founded upon those memories. His father, his aunt Séraphie, his grand-parents, his mother's delightful wraith, his earliest friends, his masters, never cease to serve him as models, as standards of sensitivity, maliciousness, stupidity or tediousness. He sets them over against all the other people whom he later meets, and arrives at maturity provided with a complete set of characters.



On one of his birthdays, Henri Brûlard undoes his trousers,—for the purpose of writing in the waistband: *I have reached the age of fifty.*

Every lover of Brûlard has spent some minutes pondering over this disclosure. What could possibly have been its purpose?—What was the object

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of this uncommon proceeding? What prompted the second gesture, that of making note of it?—Did Beyle really make this entry on so personal a ledger?—In case he simply trumped up this little act to what end was his extraordinary invention directed?—What reader of the future did he think might be affected by it?—Did he wish to make his journal “living and singular,” or to indicate its sincerity, through the almost indecent intimacy of this detail? *Hypotheses non fingo...*

And, too, what is the meaning of those linguistic caprices, those very numerous notes in which but little mysterious English or Italian words are inserted?

Why write—*Lettre of the author of the Cenci?*—Or “*c’est à forthy (sic) seven que Dominique...*” etc.?

At other times, he affects innocuous permutations of syllables,—*les terspres, la ligionre...*

I hope with all my heart that he did not flatter himself that all this would deceive the curious.

In these habits, I see only a cryptographic comedy. He pretends to write in cipher, in much the same way that an actor pretends to eat or to drink; and perhaps, he does so to give himself the sensation of conniving with himself,—of being *in a little closer intimacy with himself than is the ordinary SELF*.

Perhaps, he felt vaguely that the natal language, that of inner speech, might insidiously suggest to him, by the round-aboutness of the expression, a manner of feeling that was not absolutely his own, and that was independent of his nation? The Free Self dwells in Cosmopolis and thinks in all languages.

It is true that every jealously and powerfully personal man forges for himself a secret language. There takes place in a head what takes place in a

family or in a very small group, such as a pair of friends or lovers. Every alliance is immediately sealed by the formation of a private vocabulary. Every private understanding is organized at the expense of public conventions. Stendhal conspires with Stendhal, under various names (129 pseudonyms have been counted by Léautaud), sometimes against Stendhal, but always against the stupid, the self-sufficient and the callous.

Stendhal, inventor of the *happy few*, with his decided preference for secrecy of opinion and for narrow circles formed by the same likes and dislikes, makes me think of the spontaneous generation of those very small, very fervent, and rightly extremist groups out of which came all the innovations and ideas that have transformed our literature, three or four times over, during the past fifty or sixty years. In a certain sense, he is the ancestor of that "esotericism" which is to be found at the origin of Naturalism, Parnassus and Symbolism. Experience has shown that these literary "chapels" are of some good. The "public at large" has its right to the regular, tested products of the industry, but the renovation of the industry requires numerous trials and bold research that can be undertaken only in the laboratories, and only the laboratories permit one to achieve the very high temperatures, the infinitely rare reactions, the degrees of enthusiasm and those far-reaching analyses without which neither the sciences nor the arts would have any but an all too predictable future.

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These few traits of Beyle's that I have just called up, although difficult to explain, are more or less

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invaluable. They doubtless depend upon theories and hobbies. I believe that I perceive in them a certain amount of planning, a speculation on the future reader, a perceptible intention to inveigle through a negligence and apparent unpremeditation, which imply and insinuate a "heart to heart" relation between the author and the unknown reader who is to be inveigled...

Stendhal, an ideologist after his own lights, loved precepts and principles. He compiled for himself axioms of conduct and of esthetics; he made pretensions to rationalization; but he could not have reasoned out sufficiently that which seems to us so little reasonable.

As for his hobbies, they are obvious. But what, exactly, is a hobby?



The thing that strikes one most in a page of Stendhal, that which at once gives him away, and wins over or irritates the reader,—is the *Tone*. He possesses, and moreover affects, the most individual tone in all literature. This tone is so marked, it brings the man so close, that in the eyes of Stendhalians it excuses: 1) negligences, the will to be negligent, the disregard of all formal qualities of style; 2) various pilferings and quantities of plagiarisms. In all criminal matters, the essential is for the accused to make himself infinitely more interesting than his victims. What do Stendhal's victims mean to us?—Out of the dull property of others, he has constructed works that can be read with pleasure, for the reason that he has instilled into them a certain *tone*.





And in what, then, does this tone consist?—I have, perhaps, already told you: To be lively, at any price, to write as one talks when one is a man of wit, with allusions that are even obscure, brusque interruptions, leaps and parentheses; to write almost as one talks to oneself; to keep up the pace of a free and easy conversation; to carry the thing, at times, to the point of sheer monologue; to flee fine writing, always and everywhere, and to make it evident that one is fleeing it, that one is counter-acting the phrase *per se*, which, by its rhythm and its sweep, might sound too pure and too fine, might achieve that sustained manner which Stendhal jeers at and detests, in which he sees only affectation, posture and by no means disinterested mental reservations.

This plan, these decrees he enacts for himself are, in short, for the purpose of creating a native accent; his own avowed aim begets the desire to pile up in a work all the symptoms most expressive of *sincerity*. His discovery in point of style was, doubtless, his having dared to write according to the dictates of his *character*, that character which he knew thoroughly well, and which he *imitated* to perfection.

I do not dislike this tone which he invented for his own use; it delights me at times, amuses me always, though not in the way the author intended, but rather by the comic effect that so much sincerity and a bit too much of *life* inevitably produce upon me. I confess that his intonations seem to me three or four times too sincere; I perceive his plan of being himself, of being genuine to the point of falseness. Truth, when it is abetted, imperceptibly turns, under the pen, into truth that is formed to appear true. Truth and the will to truth together

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make up an unstable mixture, which germinates a contradiction, and from which a falsified product never fails to emerge.

How is it possible not to choose the best, in this *truth* one deals with; how can one avoid underlining, filling in, coloring, and attempting to produce something clearer, stronger, more disturbing, more intimate and ruder than the model? *In literature, the true is inconceivable.* By simplicity, by oddity, by overworked precision, by negligence, by the avowal of things more or less shameful, but always *selected*,—selected as carefully as possible,—always, and by all means, whether it is Pascal, Diderot, Rousseau or Beyle, and whether the nudity we are shown is that of a sinner, a cynic, a moralist or a libertine, it is inevitably illuminated, colored and made-up according to all the rules of the mental theater. We well know that one disrobes only to produce an effect. A great saint, who left off his clothing in the public square, knew it also. Everything that is uncustomary is unnatural; it implies effort, consciousness of effort, intention and, therefore, artifice. A woman strips as though she were about to make her appearance on the stage.

There are, then, two ways of falsifying, one by the act of embellishing, the other by intentness upon *achieving truth*.

The latter case is, perhaps, the one which reveals the most insistent pretensions. It denotes, also, a certain despair of exciting public interest by purely literary means. These truth-tellers are never very far away from eroticism.

Moreover, authors of Confessions, Memoirs or Intimate Journals are invariably dupes of their hope of shocking; and we, the dupes of these dupes. It is never oneself that one wishes to exhibit as one

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really is; it is quite well known that a real person has very little to teach us about what he is; so, one writes the confessions of another being who is more remarkable, purer, blacker, more alive, more sensitive, and even more *himself* than is admitted; for the self has its degrees. He who confesses himself lies, and flees the real truth, which is neutral, or formless, and generally indistinct. But self-confession dreams always of fame, scandal, apology or a mission.

Within himself, Beyle played a dozen parts: the dandy, the cold man of reason, the art-connoisseur, the 1812 soldier, the lover of love, the politician and the historian. He gives himself something like a hundred pseudonyms, less from a desire to conceal himself than to feel that he is living in numerous replicas. He carries about in his portmanteau, as an actor on the road carries his wigs, false-beards and costumes, his *Bombet*, his *Dominique*, his hardware-dealer... In the *Mémoires d'un Touriste*, gotten up as a prosperous business-man traveling for business purposes, he speaks the language of railway carriages, plays the economist, airs his views on the government, criticizes and makes over the project for future railway lines. He finds amusement in scaring himself with the police spy system, is suspicious of the postal authorities, uses ciphers and signs so transparent that they would be comical, if his fears were not trumped up, and if he did not long for what he fears. He peoples existence the best he can, and a few feigned anxieties help him to the sensation of living. His excessive love of mystery-mongering, mimicry and of a show of secrecy are faintly reminiscent of Punchinello.

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This temperament which begot in him a perpetual drama led him, in return, to view all human affairs in the light of comedy. Supremely alive to hypocrisy, he was able to detect from afar simulation and dissimulation in the social milieu. His faith in the universality of prevarication was a firm, almost a constitutional one. He went so far to search out and define the things that a man could not possibly counterfeit (personal courage and pleasure).

This extremely "conscious" being attached an infinite value to "naturalness." This master of the art of analysing complete characters depicted only charmingly simple types,—Fabrice's, Lucien's, persons still pure, brave, youthful and fresh, who, seized at the moment they enter the world, move about ingenuously in the midst of an intricate charade.

He himself feigned, and attributed to himself, sincerity. But what *is* being sincere?—There is practically no difficulty, when it is merely a question of the relations between individuals; but what of one's relations to oneself?—As I have said here, and have repeated, no sooner does "volition" begin to play a rôle, than the *desire-to-be-sincere-with-onself* becomes, inevitably, a principle of falsification.

Exterior sincerity is the harmony of man's two faces: one visible, the other deduced or probable. But in order that the notion of inner sincerity may have a meaning, it is necessary that a kind of operation, a division of the subject, should introduce into our recent, almost nascent states, an absolute observer of some sort... The observer is supposed to tell *us* whether the thought which has just been conceived is or is not in keeping with a certain constant idea



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of ourselves that we possess, or should possess. This crude analysis will suffice to render explicit some of the conventions which intervene in the illusion of sincerity. This is not all: These conventions are themselves necessarily borrowed from the outside world;—from an achieved morality, for example—(judging oneself, blaming oneself is a comedy).

Comedy and convention consist in a certain substitution of *what we know for what we are*,—and we do not know what we are.

In other words, Stendhal's sincerity,—like all deliberate sincerities, without exception, — was mingled with a comedy of sincerity which he was acting out. Being sincere is tantamount to ignoring or putting out of the picture the observer, the referee. Stendhal measured, by this means and with his heart, the shamming of others, and looked upon himself as somehow infinitely *sensitized* to that secondary "truth" which is attributable to every person, and which every person would exhibit to the observer who had taken a position far enough back in his reflective consciousness.

Nearly everything he heard sounded false to his ear. He translated people at sight, or thought he did.

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The age was eminently favorable to this kind of intellectual activity.

Never were circumstances more propitious to social masquerades. Ten governmental administrations in fifty years. People had lived as best they were able under governments of short and difficult duration, all of which were anxious to probe into feelings and none of which was opposed to deception. They had witnessed the moulting and

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breath-taking metamorphosis of the most solemn personages, swift changes of party-badges, the phantasmagoria of power, the exits and reentries of legitimacy, of liberty, of the imperial eagles, and even of God; they had viewed the astonishing spectacle of men bewildered in the midst of their oaths, torn between their memories, their passions, their interests, their rancour and their prophecies... Some dimly felt upon their heads a scaffolding of head-dresses, a wig, a skull-cap, the revolutionary red cap, a hat with tricolored plume, a three-cornered hat, an every-day hat. Sometimes surprised, sometimes justified by events; now, by the re-statement of the fleur-de-lys, now by the revival of the flame of 1815, now by the dupery of 1830, always dependent upon the moment, trained practically to change over-night from proscribers to proscribed, from suspects to magistrates, from ministers to fugitives, they lived a more or less dangerous farce, and ended for the most part, in whatever party or under whatever hue of circumstance, no longer believing in anything except money. This *positive* tendency became apparent under Louis-Philippe, when self-enrichment was at last seen to be the shameless and unglossed aim, the supreme lesson, the ultimate truth, and the definitive moral of a half-century of social and political experiment. On the ruins of governments, Stendhal beheld the establishment of a new world. He was able to observe the beginning of the reign of the word and of business. The parliamentary system was being tried out,—a system essentially dramatic, closely bound up with the laws of the theater, consisting of apostrophes, rejoinders, and brusque reversals of opinion; a system founded on speech, on the emotional event, on effects, audience and theatrical

idols. Parties were formed. The public witnessed the monstrous advent of statistical values, of *opinions*, of proportional averages, of confused and fluctuating majorities, for the management of which there is immediately created the art of vitiating and infecting the already impure springs of power, and of interpreting its irresponsible oracles; reign of abstract myths and their conflicts, apparitions, setting-in-motion of black spectres, red spectres, projected, called up and manipulated by clever wire-pullers...

The same age saw the resounding entry, hand in hand, of finance and publicity into the political field. The era of big business had arrived. The hour had struck for undertaking the far-reaching transformation of the world through industry. But all the sciences combined would never have succeeded without the power of the word. Commercial eloquence bred on all sides countless swarms of "suckers." Bond-issue campaigns, circulars and irresistible advertising multiplying their vulgar fascinations, all capital was mobilized at the call of promoters and associations. Public credulity developed beyond all expectation.

Even in the field of Letters, a sort of revolution had intervened, and the Muses had been trained in the customs, the abuses and the charlatanry of electoral struggles. In poetry, factions were formed, which adopted the uncouth and violent manners of political parties. Manifestoes were framed. The opening performance of *Hernani* was a veritable "mass-meeting," with champions and opponents organized, places and rôles being indicated in advance.

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All this was by no means favorable to universal frankness. Everyone who counted lied, exaggerated or tried to put on an honest face. Could it have been otherwise?

It was a period when all high posts were occupied by turn-coats or surmounted by sly "weather-cocks."

The most august lips had been known to utter lies on the most sacred occasions; some on their swords, others on the Gospel, still others on the Charter; but all in turn were constrained to sacrifice solemnly to falsehood. Promises of peace, liberty or pardon, assurances of the Allies,—all lies. The bulletins of Napoleon's army, the proclamations of successive authorities, the newspapers of every tendency had lied, were still lying, and would go on lying. Speakers lied from rostrum, and pulpit, at the Bourse and at the Institute; even philosophy lied, even the arts, even style!—Chateaubriand and poetic style lied. Monsieur Victor Hugo and his friends disfigured and distended truth with each word they uttered...

A small table of the functions of the lie from 1800 to 1840 might be prepared by a patient reader, exclusively with sentences clipped from the works, letters, journals and notes of *Dominique*.



Stendhal's suspicion and distrust were not limited to charging with charlatanry all the politics and almost all the literature of his time; on certain occasions even science is not spared. Somewhere or other, he tells a quite plausible story of two learned quacks. These clever men agree between themselves to have it noised about that they know

one of those unfathomable tongues that are easier to teach than to understand, Etruscan or prehistoric Mexican. The authorities, only too happy to appear to honor the Sciences and encourage talents that give them no annoyance, shower them with decorations, pensions and honorary professorships.

Beyle, on the other hand, retained a rather remarkable respect for mathematics. He had made some preparation for the Polytechnique and had come to appreciate the beauties of the second degree equation. He had hoped that his algebra might get him away from Grenoble. He got away by other means; but as a result of his brief preparation, he kept that precious and formidable habit of mind which consists in regarding as identically meaningless all things *vague*, and indeed all the undemonstrable values in the sphere of mind.

I note in passing that the illustrious Lagrange is perhaps the only one of his contemporaries of whom he never speaks save in terms of the highest respect.

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#### As for the clergy...

The clergy, for Stendhal, is a most welcome stimulant. At times Stendhal roguishly draws for us a bishop gazing at his reflection, a mitred Narcissus studying his own attempts to perform the consecration, nobly and unctuously, before a sacristy mirror; at other times, he adopts a brutal tone, to denounce the knavery or to scoff at the stupidity of ecclesiastics. Even Voltaire did not treat the priesthood with such harshness: he did not venture into the very heart of the priest, to seek for what he claimed to have already found,—falsehood, or else the most inane credulity, both of



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which Beyle always discovers. Except for the excellent Blanès, the astrologist and the free-thinking, conjuring, and somewhat heretical abbé, one does not find a priest in Beyle's work who is not, or may not be, a hypocrite or a fool (4). No exception, and no compromises. One cannot conceive a third category, a not unfavorable combination, without either immorality or absurdity, of the man and the Order.

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The problem is a real one. The priest is a mystery in the eyes of the religiously indifferent. The problem is closely bound up with the fact that these observers are on the outskirts of religion. The intelligent unbeliever necessarily regards the priest as an enigma, a monster half-man, half-angel, who astonishes, amuses and rather often alarms him. He asks himself: "*How can anyone be a priest?*"

This delicate and very real problem of the possibility of priesthood is well worth reflection.

It is impossible to touch Stendhal but that, in some form, the question of sincerity comes to mind. The problem of the priest, that is to say, of the professional believer, is but a particular aspect of the problem of belief. The sincerity or the intelligence of the believer is always uncertain in the eyes of the unbeliever, and the converse is sometimes true. It is almost inconceivable to the incredulous that a man of education, calmly attentive, capable of taking an objective view of his

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(4) M. Paul Arbelet has pointed out to me that Abbé Chélan, in the *Rouge et le Noir*, and Abbé Pirard are to be classed with Blanès among those of Stendhal's priests who are lacking neither in faith nor in intelligence.

desires or of his formless fears (or who attributes to them only an individual, organic and almost morbid significance), capable also of holding clear converse with himself and of properly separating provinces and values, should not reject as fables and legends all those accounts of strange events, immemorial or improbable, which are essential to the authority of any religion, that he should not consider the fragility of the evidence and of the reasoning upon which dogmas are founded, or that he should not be led to negation by his astonishment upon observing that revelations and counsels of literally infinite importance to man are offered to him as dangerous Sphinx-like enigmas, with such feeble guarantees and in forms so far removed from those which he is accustomed to demand of real things. Nothing is more difficult to imagine than "faith," nothing more difficult to attribute without reserve to someone like ourselves. There is no doubt that it does exist; but one wonders with what it coexists in those in whom it exists. An unbeliever sees in it a peculiarity, although a contagious one; he feels that a believer of distinguished or superior intelligence, a man like Faraday, the leader of the Sandemanian sect, or Pasteur, must, really, contain two men within himself.

The difficulty is even more serious when it is a question of the continuity of faith and its permanent action. The unbeliever will not easily concede that sincere faith may coexist with a conduct that is not irreproachable, any more than he can conceive that it may be in accord with mental rigour and lucidity. If, then, he remarks in a believer mistakes or vices, he will always be tempted to conclude that this sinner's faith is pure simulation.

## THIS QUARTER

The believer's sin is, somehow, a *temptation* to the unbeliever. It is a sort of trap which the "psychology" of one lays for the "psychology" of the other.

Stendhal *visse, scrisse e amo* in the midst of a religious back-flow. He saw the appearance of the *Génie du Christianisme*, and I can imagine what effect this tiresome and enormously influential book may have had on him. Chateaubriand, with this work, marks the beginning of that picturesque and romantic mysticism the literary and even religious consequences of which have continued down to our own day. But Stendhal preserved within himself all that was needed for him to avoid being beguiled by this renovation of the beauties and the emotional virtues of faith and religion. He possessed unpleasant memories of pious folk by whom he had seen his childhood clouded. He retained a remarkable faith in the spirit of the Encyclopedists and, perhaps, never lost the great hopes that were held, in the latter half of the XVIIIth century, of reducing the knowledge of mankind to a finite system of precise laws, clearly written and logically combinable, constructed on the model of those pure and beautiful analytical structures by which the Clairauts, D'Alemberts and Lagranges had represented the physical world as it was conceived in their day. Abstract sensualist that he was, he incarnated rather well a protest of the year 1760 against the year 1820 and its trivial harangues.

Moreover, as the poet of personal energy, outspoken admirer of the bold and violent actions of the Convention, and worshipper of the earlier Bonaparte, the past as a whole awed him precious little. He would retain only its individual traits, the characteristics of those of its actors who were

unreasonable and strong by virtue of their own abilities. Toward everything traditional, he necessarily had the same reactions as do all those who do not readily allow others to think, judge and choose for them.

To men of this stamp, traditions and religions are essentially antipathetic, and odious. They see in them powers founded upon *imitation*, this imitation being aided, upon occasion, as Pascal very clearly and approvingly pointed out, by *comedy*:

"Follow in the path by which they went in the beginning; *it is by acting just as though they believed*, by taking holy water, etc."

(At this point, picture Stendhal's expression upon reading the passage, if he ever did.)

It is, doubtless, because those men never find, in their obdurate hearts, the thing that compels one to all sacrifices of intellect and pride, and which drives the body to accept the comedy in order that, little by little, it may shape the soul to truth. They have no intimate perception of that *substance of things hoped for*, which, taken together with received teachings, external precepts, and regular observances, brings about and builds up religion in a man. They see at life's end only a wretched quarter of an hour. *No morrow*, they think; and death represents for them only one of the essential properties of life: that of losing all the others.

One can understand that, for minds such as these, there exists what I have termed the problem of the priest. As I have said above, Stendhal solves it summarily. His mental make-up and the resulting development of his earliest impressions, that vivacity of his which carried his antipathies to the limit and expressed them in a

## THIS QUARTER

formula too simple to be true, too high-lighted to be applicable to men, cause him to fall very readily into a great confusion of methods. He bases his reasoning on priests of his own forging. He puts himself in their place: in their place, he necessarily feels like a scoundrel or a fool. Since he cannot picture for himself their faith, he accords them only credulity. Since he knows they are not all fatuously credulous, those who are not he charges with falsehood and accuses of fraudulence and dissimulation.

But it is an obvious, though very prevalent error to pretend to resolve by means of pure reasoning problems of which the elements cannot be enumerated or defined. Only questions of pure algebra can be treated per se and with the aid of the head alone. It is for observation to decide, when it is a question of reality. That it is possible that there are priests who are both genuine and of rich mental endowment, I am assured by my own experience. I know some such priests; and for me, that is sufficient. I do not say that I have come to any explanation of it; but I do say that Stendhal's opinion was based on the *accidental fact* that he never knew any who were like mine.

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It is in this manner that one is led into error by the desire to see clearly. This example of Stendhal's judgment of priests leads one directly to a general observation. The greater number of those persons who flatter themselves that they know the human heart do not distinguish that clear sightedness upon which they pride themselves from an unfavorable disposition toward



mankind. Their tongues are bitter or ironic. Nothing, it is true, gives one the appearance of being a *psychologist* like an habitual attitude of cavilling. To see clearly is to see the dark side of things, according to this occasionally rather convenient understanding.

In this respect (a thing that delights lovers of incongruous alliances), Beyle ranks just after those Fathers and doctors who show least indulgence to man, and the most rigorous masters of theological morality. Form and purpose are quite different, but the suspicion in their glance and the almost culpable desire to draw direct conclusions are identical. The *worst* is the aliment of critical temperaments. Evil is their prey. For them, then, it must be the rule. A "psychologist," after the manner of Stendhal, thorough-going sensualist that he is, has need of the badness of our nature. What would become of men of wit if there were no original sin?

Balzac, more sombre still, assembles about himself, in order that he may form a deeper conception of society, all those whose professions make of them observers and searchers-out of infamies and disgraceful things, the confessor, the doctor, the lawyer, the judge and the policeman, all charged with revealing, defining, and in a manner administering, the social dustbin. At times, when I read Balzac, I have a *second-sight* and almost lateral vision of a vast and living opera audience, all shoulders, flashes of light, scintillations, velvets,—men and women of the highest society, exposed or opposed to an extralucid eye. A swarthy, extremely swarthy gentleman, extremely solitary, contemplates and reads the hearts of this elegant throng. All these groups gilded with

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richly-shadowed light, these faces, this sea of flesh, these gems, these charming murmurs, these arrested smiles are naught before his gaze, which is operating on the splendid assembly and pitilessly transforming it into a hideous collection of vices, wretchedness and secret crimes. He sees everywhere only evils, infamous pasts or errors; he sees adultery, debts, abortions, syphilis, cancers, folly and lust.

But however deep such penetration may go, it is, in my opinion, too simple and too systematic. Each time we accuse and pass judgment,—the depths are still unfathomed.



Someone should prepare a “Stendhal Monologue.” It would be made up exclusively of Stendhal’s own phrases, taken and assembled from his complete works. All of his problems could then be had in one reading.

To live. To please. To be loved. To love. To write. Not to be duped. To be Oneself,—and yet to *succeed*. How to have one’s books read? And how live, scorning or detesting all parties?

Where to live?—Italy is in the hands of princes and priests. Paris has a horrible climate, and every one is scheming. Little passion, too much vanity. It is possible to be a man of wit there.

There remains the future. (The delusion of posterity is left him.) I must take as my policy future fame. In fifty years what pleases me now will please others. What makes me *myself* will move those minds with whom an assured fame rests. Then, what is now celebrated will be scorned. De Maistre and de Bonald will be laughed

## PAUL VALERY

at; Chateaubriand and fine writing will have become impossible. Besides, it will be very dull. There will be two Chambers and the American republican system will have triumphed everywhere. Hypocrisy will have changed its mask.

It is essential, however, to hold out, to bridge over half-a-century. How, without perishing, to pass over forty years of romanticism in order to attain literary eternity? A chain of connoisseurs, a sect of the *Happy Few* must bear him to the day of Taine and Paul Bourget, to the era of that vigorous poet Nietzsche, German-speaking Slav, to whom the idea of energy is a pleasant poison, and who will transmute into a "Good European" the Stendhalian cosmopolite.



He was a very amusing chap, this Beyle, possessed of a great desire to shock, along with more exquisite ambitions. He rarely misses a chance to remind us that we should be offended at what he says, and he has not completely failed in his purpose. He provokes artists by his style, the authorities by his irreverence, women by his cynicism and his system. The fertility, the opinions, and the "nerve" of this immensely witty fellow recall at times one of those prehistoric traveling salesmen who dazzled and wore out their end of the boarding-house table, in the age of the last stage-coaches and the first locomotives. But this Gaudissart who has put up at the *Grand Hôtel de l'Europe et de l'Amour* is an eccentric of the first water. What he sells lives, will live and will make others live. His sparkling and singular trinkets will turn the heads of numerous philosophers. Solemn men will labour to become as sprightly and as clear as he.

## THIS QUARTER

H. B., in my opinion, is a type of mind much more than a man of letters. He is too peculiarly himself to be reduced to terms of a mere writer. That is why he pleases and displeases, and pleases me.

I have seen Pierre Louÿs insult this intolerable prose, casting away and stamping on the *Rouge et le Noir*, with a weird and perhaps just fury...

But Stendhal such as he is, whatever he may be, in spite of the muses, in spite of his pen, and somewhat in spite of himself, has become one of the demi-gods of our Letters, a master of that abstract and ardent body of writing, drier and lighter than any other, which is characteristic of France. It is a type which takes into account only acts and ideas, which disdains the tinsel, which laughs at harmony and balanced form. It is solely concerned with the line, the tone, the formula and the arrow; it is lavish in fore-shortenings and in lively reactions of the mind. Its manner is always swift, deliberately insolent; it seems ageless and, somehow, matterless; it is personal to an extreme, directly *centered* about the author, disconcerting, like a man of ready wit, and it keeps at a distance dogmatics and poetics, which it hates with an equal hatred.

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There is no having done with Stendhal. I can think of no greater praise.

(Translated from the French by W. T. Bandy.)

# NOW YOU'RE CONTENT

by

André Spire

*Now you're content...  
Heavens, your nose is almost straight—  
And besides, many Gentile noses are curved.*

*Now you're content...  
Your hair is scarcely curly—  
And besides, not all Gentiles have straight hair.*

*Now you're content...  
The curve of your head is scarcely "oval" —  
And besides, there are some Gentiles whose heads  
[aren't round.*

*Now you're content...  
Your face is almost impassive now...  
And besides, many Gentiles have mobile faces.*

*Now you're content...  
You hardly gesticulate any more...  
Ah, sometimes Gentiles talk with their hands.*

*Now you're content...  
Gentiles invite you to all their merrymakings  
And you've learned to behave almost as badly as  
[they.*

*In tennis habit, smoking jacket, or in lounging robe  
How well you can cluck, "Charming! Fine indeed!"  
With the same smart air as the best among them.*



## THIS QUARTER

*Now you're content...*

*They take you along when they top off their fun,  
To the place where all their merrymaking ends.*

*Their hands full, their mouths full,  
They fly to their pleasures with all their heart  
—But you, what are you doing in your corner?*

*What are you doing there? awkward, dejected,  
Full of pity, full of contempt!  
Jew, you have no guts!*

*So much practising! so much self-constraint!  
So many trials!—and then to fail here!*

*Better keep quiet and act like the others  
Or they'll begin to make fun of your nose;*

*And thus drive away your old, true soul  
Which was following you and searching for you.*

(Translated from the French by Stanley Burnshaw.)

# OVERTURE

by

Pierre Minet

Here I am, with persistence, putting on paper what I feel but indistinctly, — I who give myself to life rather than to thought, yet determined to write books.

.....  
In this fishing village, from morning till night, my quest proceeds, and at bed-time I confess its futility. With paper before me I am shaping a phrase, which, later, only serves as an excuse for its abandonment, because of its insufficient interest. I rise and go out, instead, to look at the fish spread out on the fishwives' stands.

.....  
It is in the morning that I always hazard my efforts. The afternoon finds me stretched out on the beach, wilting in the heat and reading Don Quixote.

I pull down my bathing suit, baring my body to the groin, where, clumsily rolled up, it covers my sex. This makes some persons break out in laughter, although no one has ever disparaged my body, which is well formed and hairless. By and by

## THIS QUARTER

the heat abates and I begin to feel chilly; I dress and proceed to a café for an apéritif.

.....

My ideas are abundant and never absent, but seem unsatisfactory. They lead nowhere, definitely. No sooner do I express one than I discard it, intending to take it up again later in the evening. When evening comes, nothing happens, my mind in the meantime having run off on another tangent. My ideas never seem to be clear and well defined. Those that come to me are a fraction of some whole, which is yet to be realized, but probably never will be. I imagine too much. For example: "Here is this woman—she is a beautiful woman. If I were acquainted with her, would I marry her? But what's the use,—I am poor. I could never be happy in the knowledge that my wife would have to wash dishes." So far so good; there is nothing amiss with the reasoning. But—"Considering her character we should doubtless go far together. Still, I should never be able to throw over my present mistress, and so I see a conflict looming up before me, and that would be too bad." I ruminate further: "However, I shall overcome this difficulty by corrupting my wife, untamed and sensuous as she is. I believe she will consent to it; the three of us would then go away together and establish a love régime the like of which was never seen. Writing, composing admirable sonorities, which I shall be doing in the meantime, fame will surely come my way, as, indeed, I badly need it should." And so I go on abandoning myself to my thoughts entirely. The death of my wife must also be anticipated, and my behaviour during the funeral exercises. At that same moment another image obtrudes itself and seizes upon me in like manner. All of which would

## PIERRE MINET

not be much to worry about, were it not that the thoughts themselves are a source of irritation to me, and I judge them to be but an index of my own ineptitude, and a ridiculous occupation.

.....

I busy myself also in other ways: I know some fishermen with whom I drink at times, and who give me permission to go out boating with them in their "flats",—this designation being due to the boats' lack of keels. I had been using two oars until I learned to row, but now I use only one, which I like to see skip over the water, while I steer, now more to the right than to the left, now to the left rather than to the right, according to the direction I wish the boat to take. This sport suits me admirably, but it ends by covering my hands with blisters; it also soils my white beach sandals when, slipping, my foot is caught between the slats on the boat's floor, beneath which there is always some water; or at disembarking when, again slipping and falling, my sandals become stained with the mud and slime which adhere to the stones on the jetty: incidents without importance in themselves, yet proper enough to mention, since I myself am of no importance, but entirely given over to this manner of employing my time.

.....

A fisherman is my friend, and his name is Janot. We go out together often in the company of Baron, a mariner, and much to the latter's profit. I mean by this that he is taking me for one who comes to the sea for rest, who smokes ready-rolled cigarettes and has the manners of a gentleman; so he takes advantage of me, follows me about to caf  s uninvited. When we are out at sea he drinks out of my bottle, which contains white wine, he having no-

## THIS QUARTER

thing better than cider in his own. But there is something irresistible about him, and I rather like being made to do things. I am living amongst simple folk who give no thought to what they do, and feel no concern over what they see. And so I lose all sense of my own identity and am conscious only of being one of them.

.....  
I shall entitle these notes "Overture", because they are really in the nature of an opening, by which must enter the integral whole, if I ever achieve its completion. I had been pondering two plans, which I scrapped after they had proved disheartening from inception. I no longer remember the first one, save that the hero's name was Albert, a character whom I had intended to place out of his proper sphere; he was intelligent to no mean degree, and an idler. I shall perhaps conserve the second project for the reason that certain phrases occurring in it possess "timbre". For instance: "I—who am writing this"—so runs my thought—"who feel irritated by my own futility, tormented by work which yields no joy, had I not better deal with the exploits of my body?" That is: to narrate in a simple manner what, at all moments, I give of myself, spiritually as well as physically. Since the spiritual eludes me or remains obscure to me, it will be my task to express, with much stress, the physical, which, no doubt, will best reveal my present propensities. This not so much in terms of experienced gratifications as treating of the emotions with which it is honeycombed. To demonstrate that the body contains all, that it is to the body I must turn to find myself as to lose myself, and that Time made of it a mechanism which thinks.



## PIERRE MINET

I delight in the gratification of the senses, but only when it is accompanied by sentiment. I love the senses for their flying in the face of reality and begetting folly, a folly keener and of greater frenzy than the mind's folly. Moreover, to me, who have had no other education, they constitute all experience. Not that I am deficient spiritually, but the spiritual is of no use to me, save as it is intertwined with my life, with what is the visible image of my life. I do not study to acquire knowledge, and prefer that events should be my nutriment. Or it may be that in order to reflect, I must first have material substance to reflect upon rather than content myself with learning or understanding things which, for purposes of their own existence, can well enough do without me.

It has been my intention to write at length of the body, according to my own familiarity with it. To sing it, not after the manner of the poet, but to the same rhythms as those of love,—to make love. Understand me!—to deify the body through its acts, omitting none of them, but on the contrary, ennobling it in virtue of them, raising it by the written word to the high place it holds, once its powers are understood. I would describe its ecstasies and gestures, those at least I myself have felt and enacted. Merely to have conceived the task has rendered me valiant and chivalrous. But I have no sooner begun the work than I arrest it for this: "Having at fall of evening left my home of plenty, I yet returned to it once more, to find, again, joy in its stately beauty and its atmosphere. I alone had the good fortune to rejoice in my possessions and to cherish them, as well as to wish all fulness of life to Her whom I had left there slumbering. Although it was not for long that I was to have departed hence, yet

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an impulse of admiration directed back my senses that they might again savor the joy of ownership and the vision of Agnes. For I felt that this dwelling contained my great treasure, the woman molded of desires and vision I alone had given her." All of which is, perhaps, not of much import, but it demonstrates how a young man, whose desire is to shine, endeavors to express himself, and particularly to express sentiments dependent on phrases rather than phrases on sentiments. When I am composing, I have the feeling that my eyes behold the page before me as if it were a beautiful apple. And beholding it, my preoccupation is not with what it contains, but with its appearance and the beauty—which I believe to be classical—of its phrases.

.....

It is only when my mind is uneasy that I feel the impulse to write. The note book receives the outbursts which absence induces. And if, in the course of the day, I am overcome by a sense of unimportance, when evening comes, all that constitutes my actual self disappears and gives place to this: "The woman I love is there, in that impossible world which is named Paris. I say impossible, because I am conscious of my incapacity to picture to myself the images of remote things. Agnes makes me suffer,—not that I have any anxiety concerning her physical body, but because she is living entirely within me, who know her, who am always conscious of her and love her." My suffering is without basis and reason, and it penetrates me as a mystery penetrates. I both struggle against her and want to be with her; and because I am as I am, I fill the pages of this note book: "Agnes, you are increasingly gaining a hold upon me—when just now I caught

a glimpse of the edge of water at the back of the dwellings that are being eaten up by the blackness of the hour, I leaped from my window towards you"; or this way: "this is the time that has all prerogatives, it opens all doors and some of them are most bewildering." I share with Agnes even her bodily equipoise, the sense of the tottering of her body, were it suddenly to sway too much to the left—I am her very character and her character's tracks, between which I move. But I, the spectator..." etc., etc.

I marshal the resources of my being that I may extend them, and I try to put into words all that is manifest within me.

Someone is aspiring to self-fulfilment, but his own thoughts blight the endeavor. He would put them away from him, offhand, but is unable to hinder their returning. "Very well"—he argues—"if such is the case, I had better see what I can do about it. I shall express them, and so gain my freedom." I am that someone.

These obstructive thoughts form the least complicated side of me. They are always palpable. And about like this: "What is white is not black. Sunshine after rain. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush: it shall be yours;" etc., etc. They are what all the world knows, but assume an air of distinction, in which, indeed, I demand they should be clothed. I put them on paper, but do not care to read them over. Nor can I forget them.

To make it clear: If I had a definite idea of what I wish to write, if the book had already taken shape within me, accompanying me wherever I go, and I, knowing it in detail, were able to dedicate myself to it completely, to furnish it, wherever I might be, with fresh elements, the matter would be different.

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I would not, in that case, be hampered by external conditions,—maybe this paragraph is in itself one of the obstructive thoughts. But at this moment I still do not know what the book will be,—distinctly, that is. Accordingly, I fix a point of departure which should lead to the destination.

It is as when I wake from sleep. When the maid knocks at my door and calls out: "It's half past eight, sir," I answer: "O, yes, all right, half past eight." For some moments I am penetrated with the advent of the new day. Afterwards, fully aroused, I close my eyes to enjoy again a slumber which is restless and garnished with images. I am conscious of descending the stairs which lead to unconsciousness; and I halt on each stair to permit the fading away of the daylight, which grows feebler as I descend lower, and to endure the pins and needles which struggle up from an inert and immaterial depth. But the sense of what I leave behind is not blotted out completely because I never reach the last stair. Soon my eyes open and I rise.

It is the same with this beginning of mine. I immerse myself in it, and the wider it unfolds, the deeper is my immersion. But always it remains only a beginning, because I like to continue living in it, and have no desire to put a stop to it. When I review it, re-read it, it is like an awakening. Only, will I be able to rise?

Of all my thoughts these obstructive thoughts are the most pleasant to write down. They can run as soon as they are born. They have a multitude of forces to serve them. Is it because they never have to choose for themselves? They are giddy things, indeed.

I compare them to those young women whose good appearance is their sole quality. Well-made,

## PIERRE MINET

laughing, and possessing a spirit in union with their graces, they are like flowers. *Only they are empty.* Finding myself alongside one of them, stretched on a divan, I should not know what to do. I should not have the remotest idea at all what to do. According to me, the body should be an aureoled mass of moral interest. Entering its flesh I become conscious of its thoughts and of the joy which comes to it from the participation of the flesh with the spirit—not of the emotional utility of the flower I just spoke of.

I shall turn aside for a moment, and may the digression be forgiven me: the body is a spectacle; a gratuitous spectacle; without direction, without deviation; one simply heads straight for it. When the two of us are face to face, she sets in motion her physiognomy, not her form. After which she receives me. This, at times, lasts for hours. I do not mean hours of ecstatic enjoyment, but a slice of time which is very long by the marking of the clock, and of which we remain utterly unconscious. Nor do I mean that our abandon, our obliviousness, is due to voluptuous intensity, since when we are together, and unclothed, we give ourselves over only to mutual admiration. Our entire attention centers simply upon ourselves and within ourselves, who are forming an ambience,—the only one at the moment, all others having faded away.

I speak here, naturally, of one body only, that of Agnes. Others that I have known troubled me but little. The inference is clear: Her body is a source of great anxiety to me, always much greater when I do not see her, when she is absent.—“This may happen to anyone”—you will say. Perhaps. But are your sensations towards her as mine are? She becomes the soul of things; when I behold her in



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a car on the road, she is the spirit that abides in its speed and floats like a veiling over the objects in the passing. For her I halt in my onward course. Abruptly I halt, and let my eyes ransack the expanse of the horizon. They ransack long, as a dog's nose, in offal, not in search of a bone, but of his ideal. I am not a "shining light", in all conscience, and would have no desire to be one. I mean but little to others, and others as little to me. I look at them and I listen to them, and I speak with them, but without ever being able to give them ever so little of what preoccupies me. Conversation is a game, nothing but a game, to display one's tastes, and even more the taste of others; to hazard one's ideas in it. But I,—have I any ideas? I have no convictions; I only advance phrases of circumstance. Then, suddenly, I am embarrassed. I would gladly reveal myself; reconstruct my life (a segment of my life) before those others; but they would not understand and they would find me only insufficient. Good God! Those who seek know what they are about, but I can only feel and I am as mad as are my feelings. They who have views and preferences (so many preferences), who take such precious care of their talents (and of the standing of these talents in the world),—they can well enough say, the world is all in all to them. They constitute a society, made up of those who are like them, nothing in their world is private, nothing is lived. The only thing required is to be in agreement,—agreement concerning the value of this or that person; the keeping up of appearances; the necessity to think only thus and thus of the grandeur of oblivion; of the slight esteem of the past; concerning the right emphasis on crime (is it cowardly enough?); the power of lies; the position to take

in the face of good or evil, etc., etc. I am unable to follow all that and I go to pieces before it. They, I say, are not liable to error, not they,—for what is their common quality? Their nature, of course, and that means being precisely what they are.

They are a passionless world (and I know patterers of another kind; these blush, leap, assault or readily grasp the partner's propensities; their amateness is on display. They run after their thoughts. They utter themselves.) But if I were told that I know nothing of their privacies, I should answer that they have not any, being but victims of opportunity and of occasional outbursts. Some of them may have mistresses, with or without carnal incident, (which they reconcile readily with their most cherished convictions; and that would be well enough, if those convictions came from their inner selves, instead of being no more than the base results of a universal impulse to which they remain riveted); they make up their minds that they will not be deceived. They know beforehand what their sentiments are going to be. Especially as they do not forget that they are the exponents of an idea,—that of the advance-guard, for instance—let us laugh!— My own guide is Love. What I feel rises to my head, and there creates images, thoughts. They are of every variety. They are such as they are, and I wield no authority over them. My pleasure is not a subject for debate, and nothing whereof I am fashioned is taboo. Above all, I have no concern with externals and do not reason upon whatever may befall me. If I am mad, I have never aspired to be. The man and his mistresses of whom I was speaking know very well that they are lovers. The continuity of their relations is enough to teach them that. So each of them from time to time uses

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an arm to interlock with the other's. He offers her a seat in the tramcar during the rush hour, himself remaining standing; he leans down to her every now and then to inquire if she is quite all right, and if she is not tired. Her answer is kindly and gracious: "Don't worry about me, Robert; but you, yourself, poor boy, standing up, and being hustled about by all these people..." At other times, in the company of friends, this same Robert has other kind words for his love. Like this: "You mustn't have so much to say; let us men do the talking; just sit and look pretty."

.....  
I think sometimes: "What's the use of writing?—to show off? It is clear that nothing interests me so much as myself, and I like to be able to tell what I think I should like to become: Hence a report, not a novel."

I want to put an end to these notes. This is my idea of what I would like to do: Live over again certain bygone days, "certain smiles and certain tears." No, no! I will not go along with those who deny the ladder, the slippery ladder, the tree when it falls. I am ready to believe that everything has a meaning of its own, but, personally, I have always drawn distinctions. On certain days I take pleasure in perceiving my rhythms,—that ensemble which bursts asunder continually, which commands to live, but sometimes excuses itself. On other days, pale from my inability to exult, I fight shy of my instincts, lame duck, what! Or again, having nothing better to do, I survey legs, supposedly beautiful legs, or simply legs; pretend being "cuckoo;" hum songs of sadness, or, in public conveyances, shout "Great guns!", or smack my hip just to amuse a little lady who is sitting in the

corner, absorbed in imitating the stupefaction of the other passengers, and watching their apprehension ("O, the day of days, when madmen have their liberty, o, la-la-la!").—Well, then,—since I possess the clue to the magic of the living moment and its contending consequences,—the ones clambering up on the backs of others, smothering them, then themselves being smothered by fresh ones which... etc... Live over certain days, or rather certain of their fragments, the most significant ones. Wherein I would have to commit certain acts of great cowardice, for instance. "Not very interesting, this,"—some readers may interject. "If you possess the consciousness of guilt, if you have anything to do with morality, you are not one of us; better address yourself to our fathers." Well, that is just it! I would answer, yes, I have a conscience. It was precisely this I was coming to. A conscience which is an accurate index of the evolution of my organs, a conscience which judges me. It speaks to me in this fashion: "You pretend to be indifferent to success, to the opinion of the world; but see what, in fact, you are doing. You make pleasant, profitable voyages to great countries; you meet illustrious personages by prearrangement; you seek adulation, is it not so? You are furious when you find yourself overlooked, you, who so much seek the lime-light; and not for the mere desire of it, but from sheer need of flattery." Or: "You may say these things to Claire, but don't forget that you are using her badly; you are making a dupe of her that she may not know you for what you are, and your love for her is mere pretence. I detest you. But go on with your villainess." Or even in this manner: "By Jove, you are a fine type. I admire you and am ready to weep for the love of you. I may add that the passage you

## THIS QUARTER

have just written is well-nigh perfect." That is conscience. It is incumbent on me to express its judgments.

It is natural, also, that I should wish to become known. It is not enough that I alone should be enjoying my talent and its idiom; also the reader should hear of me. A writer is a public man. Not that he has not his own existence, his secrets, that delicate mechanism which is his intimacy, but it is these precise possessions which are the essentials of his art, it is these that he reveals. O, yes, it is but too true that there are not many who put their selves into their work! Some exhaust themselves by frantically brandishing their ideas, those beautiful bunches of grapes without content; others concoct morbid tales; tragic histories of families in the Poitou are told by a Norman (but what matter, if the talent is there...); many personages are evolved amidst settings of the greatest variety, but never is the remark made: "There! the author ushers in the I, discusses himself, falls foul of his own body, writes of it, or of his own mistress, or of some reality, which he approves or seems to analyze, that he reveals finally and..." As for myself, I am simple, and I strip rather brutally. To be sure, the more gifted ones pervade their pages tenuously, but those who cannot perceive them readily, will not pursue them with much fervor..... Wherewith I conclude.

*(Translated from the French by Edward W. Titus.)*



## POEMS

from *Une Saison en Enfer* (1)

by

Arthur Rimbaud

*Far from the birds, the herds, the village girls,  
What drank I kneeling in the underbrush,  
Amidst the clumps of tender hazel trees,  
One tepid afternoon, in haze and hush?*

*What could I drink in this young river's swirls,  
— Dumb elms, and flowerless turf, and clouds in  
[rush! —  
Drink of these yellow gourds, far from the ease  
Of home? A golden liquor veins to tease.*

*A leering tavern sign I fashioned me by hand.  
— A tempest washed the sky. — At evening's brink  
The forest floods sank through the virgin sand.  
The wind of God dashed ice gems on the pond, —*

*Weeping, I saw the gold,—and could not drink.*

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(1) This is the original version as it appeared in *Une Saison en Enfer* published by Rimbaud himself in 1873. Five of these poems were published in another version in Rimbaud's *Collected Works* issued after his death.

The Black Manikin Press is now preparing for publication a translation of *Une Saison en Enfer* by Ramon Guthrie with the incidental poems as here printed. The edition will be illustrated by Jean de Boschère.

## THIS QUARTER

\*  
\*\*

*On a summer morning at four  
The lover still by his love lies.  
Up through the bushes odours rise  
Of feasting done the night before.*

*Already the vast workshop stirs;  
Under the Hesperidian sun  
In shirt-sleeves toil at work undone  
The carpenters.*

*In deserts, soft as moss and still,  
They fashion precious canopies,  
And the townfolk will  
Paint thereon false skies.*

*Now for these men, whose toil endures,  
Who wore once Babylon's royal crest, —  
O, Venus! leave your paramours,  
Whose souls the crown of love possessed.*

*And you, O, Shepherds' Queen,  
Fetch to the laborers their wine,  
To calm the panting strength when keen  
At noon they plunge into the brine.*

\*  
\*\*

## THE SONG OF THE HIGHEST TOWER

*O, may it come, the season  
Of days crowned with unreason.*

*I waited patiently  
Time out of memory.  
Fear and suffering*

## ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*Long since had taken wing.  
With an evil thirst  
My veins nigh burst.*

*O, may it come, the season,  
Of days crowned with unreason.*

*So will a meadow plot  
Long by man forgot,  
Blossom, big with seed  
Of incense and of weed,  
To mad droning cries  
Of the filthy flies.*

*O, may it come, the season,  
Of days crowned with unreason!*

\*  
\*\*

## HUNGER

*If I have any appetite,  
It is a stone or earth to bite,  
To break my fast I have a store  
Of rock, of air, of coal, of ore.*

*Turn, my hungers, out to graze  
In fields of husk,  
Suck venomous malaise  
From weeds at dusk!*

*Munch chunks of road-mending rocks,  
Churches' rotting granite blocks,  
Boulders left in deluge's trail,  
Loaves that strew the slaty vale.*

\*  
\*\*

## THIS QUARTER

*Through the woods rang the wolf's howl  
As he spewed plume after plume  
Of his meal of gorged-on fowl:  
Like him I myself consume.*

*For salads and for fruit  
The picking day is set,  
But the spider in the hedge  
Feeds on dainty violet.*

*O let me slumber! Let me boil  
On the altar of Solomon,  
Broth will run on rusty soil  
And with Cedron's stream flow on.*

\*  
\*\*

*It has been won!  
What? Eternity.  
It is the sea  
Merged with the sun.*

*Eternal soul, aspire  
To all you vowed,  
Despite the lone night's shroud,  
The day on fire.*

*Thus you will lay aside  
Things that touch men's pride,  
That common fervor sway,  
And wing your way.....*

*Let no hope rise;  
No orietur;*

ARTHUR RIMBAUD

*No trucking with the patient wise:  
Your torment thus is sure.*

*Tomorrows spurn,  
Spurn silken memories.  
To burn, to burn,  
Your duty is.*

*It has been won!  
What? Eternity.  
It is the sea  
Merged with the sun.*



*O seasons, O chateaux !  
What soul is without flaw?*

*Happiness, by magic lore,  
I would bring to every door;*

*Hail it with lusty hullos  
Every time the French cock crows.*

*All my craving now subsides,  
Since I follow where it guides.*

*Gave it soul and flesh as gift,  
Casting effort off to drift.*

*O seasons, O chateaux !*

(English version by Edward W. Titus.)



# POPULISM

by

Léon Lemonnier

For the last ten years, ever since the war, French literature has followed the same course; no writer appears to have been strong enough to lift it out of the deep ruts furrowed by men of undoubted genius, such as André Gide and Marcel Proust. All novels deal with more or less subtle psychological analysis; the more weird the theme, the more pleased the writer seems. French, which was supposed to be the most lucid of all languages, has become an uncouth gibberish. The characters of so-called fashionable novels invariably belong to the well-to-do classes or even to what is termed Society.

It has seemed to a group of novelists, the most conspicuous of whom is André Thérive, that the time has come for a reaction against such jaded aristocratic tendencies, such hackneyed improbable stories as those which have of late monopolised the field of Fiction. Naturally enough, when we came to try to resist the influence of such baneful literature, we looked for models among the writers preceding those whose message to the present generation would seem to be played out.

We turned to the Naturalists, although, but a few years ago, everybody was persuaded that their books were out of date and that no writer would ever dare to consider their art as any longer fascinating or deserving of more than passing notice.

The French Naturalists, although they had certain theories in common, no doubt exemplified different kinds of art and evinced interests that were sometimes divergent. In spite of his epic genius and his accurate way of observing the manners of his contemporaries, Zola has become out of date, for the reason that he borrowed his framework from the scientific theories of his day. Strange to say, some of the writers who deny him genius make the same mistake in their Freudian excavations. Moreover, Zola's direct and brutal manner of dealing with sexual problems is certainly less revolting than the sly, underhand manner in which our so-called modern writers hint at the worst inclinations in man. One point on which we need to lay especial stress is the necessity of combating the influence of Freud on the novel. We are sick of those charming stories in which, throughout three hundred pages, it is darkly insinuated that the love of a daughter for her father is in no way free from carnal lust: the most audacious of Zola's descriptions seem pure in comparison with such wild revelling in perverted impulse.

The art of de Maupassant, on the contrary, has preserved its full flavour for us, simply because it aimed at nothing beyond truth and dramatic interest. But one thing seems unpleasant in him, and that is, his prejudice against all that is good and kind in human nature. You feel, somehow, that there was a kink in the man. He seems bent

## THIS QUARTER

upon reviling humanity, upon attributing the basest motives to the noblest actions. He has too often forgotten that art implies a love and sympathy for that which it creates.

One naturalist at least, if he was not entirely free from the errors of his contemporaries, has yet shown that there is a wider scope for Fiction, and that is Huysmans. He was not content with describing the life of simple people like most Naturalists; he was interested in the range of human feeling, from the decadent aesthetic researches of *A Rebours* to the diabolical madness of *Là-Bas* and the catholic tendencies of his later books.

Huysmans, no doubt, is the master of André Thérive who, among the new writers, has reacted with unflagging energy against the prevailing influences of the last ten years. In his two master-pieces, *Sans âme* and *le Charbon ardent*, he has depicted the life of lower-class Parisian girls, and the melancholy atmosphere of suburbs, as well as those strange chapels to be found in the poorer districts of Paris and the religious cravings of the humblest man.

Hence it was, we looked to him, when we conceived the idea of forming a literary group. Undoubtedly, the most obvious thing to do, upon founding a new school, is to find a name for it. That was far from being an easy task. Desiring to catch up the tradition of realism, we at first thought of calling ourselves something like neo-realists, but we soon gave up the title; for glaring epithets with the word "new" in them generally conceal old-fashioned ideas. Then, we thought of "humilist", since our principal aim was to describe humble people; but the word sounded too much like "humorist" and in France nothing is so dangerous

as a funny name, and the whole movement would have been taken as a huge joke. One of us suggested "demotist", but there was, in a Greek word like that, a smack of pedantry which could not possibly be reconciled with that simplicity which was the one supreme aim of our art. At last, we hit upon the word "populism". It clearly expressed the fact that we meant to depict the people; it was not altogether a new word in French, inasmuch as it had been used to translate the name of the German political party *Volkspartei*, but it had never as yet been applied to any artistic, political or literary movement specifically French.

Having then dubbed ourselves populists, we decided to write a manifesto. Since it would have been difficult to come to an agreement on each particular word if we had tried to compose it collectively,—you know what men of letters are;—I bravely accepted the task of expressing in writing the ideas we shared in common. This was about the beginning of August, last year. Then we all went away for our vacations, after it had been decided that the manifesto should be published by *L'Œuvre* about the middle of October, that is to say, at a time when the literary season would be opening in Paris.

For some reason which has not yet been made clear, the manifesto was published on the 27th of August. I remember reading it in an apple-orchard in Normandy, while a brightly-plumed cock was strutting along. At first, I felt furious: this was no time for a declaration of literary rights, still less for a declaration of war, seeing that everybody was away from Paris. After having fumed at the unfortunate cock for about two minutes, I sadly

## THIS QUARTER

sized up the situation: the squib, having been fired too early, would fizzle out.

Two days later, I received a letter from André Thérive who was somewhere in Savoy. He was too much the gentleman to hint that I had been a fool, but I felt he had the deepest scorn for my literary tactics; writing a manifesto is nothing; choosing the right time is of course more important. I was utterly ashamed of myself and swore that, henceforward, I would have nothing to do with literary schools. This made no impression on the cock, for it had decided to ignore a biped who could not keep his temper even on vacation.

And then something extraordinary happened. French journalists do not get much more than a month's leave. Returning to work with newly accumulated energy, they came across the manifesto and fell eagerly to discussing it. I imagine the name *populism* took their fancy; they began at once writing articles about the new school. Some of course were favourable, others supercilious, and a few tried to be insulting. The manifesto had been a success!

Then, in that Normandy orchard, I pulled myself together. I was fully convinced a reaction was necessary; when I thought the manifesto had failed, I had tried to be humorous and sceptical, because I was greatly disappointed: when a Frenchman smiles, of course, it is because he is in downright earnest.

About the middle of September, I came back to Paris, and the battle began. Twice I had to explain what we meant, first in *la Revue mondiale* on the 1st of October, then in *le Mercure de France* on the 15th of November. About the same date, André



Thérive published *le Charbon ardent*, which was a success: the victory was won.

But it was still difficult to steer between the rocks and to resist the song of the political mermaids. In France, as in most democratic countries, politics absorb most of the energies of the nation. The name we had chosen for ourselves suggested at first that we were something like Socialists or even Bolsheviks. When the critics read our novels more carefully and began to study them, they realized that, unlike most Frenchmen, we took the deepest interest in mysticism, in all the degenerate forms of the religious feeling, and it dawned upon them that we might be papists and that our intention was to gibe at the people.

We had to repeat, over and over again, that we were nothing but men of letters, and had no other intention than to try to write novels which would be, not the pastime of idlers, but works of art, in which there would be some part of our soul and of that deep love we bear to all the needy.

Then, we had to answer terrible questions, to refute the most improbable objections. We were asked: Are you sons of the people? We blushed and confessed we were 'varsity men, and had studied at the Sorbonne. There was an outcry: it is impossible to depict the people if you do not belong to the people.

I remember the objection being raised at a public debate. Each of us was obliged to reveal some part of his life. One had to explain that he had been a private in a regiment for several years and had had full time to converse with ordinary folk. Another was compelled to give his address: he had, for so many years, lived in an alley of Montmartre. It was altogether ridiculous.

## THIS QUARTER

For what does our private life matter? What if we had not, actually, lived among the people? In order to describe a class of society, it is not necessary to belong to it. How many writers have described dukes and duchesses, who were yet themselves nothing more socially than the man in the street? Far from quickening, habit dulls the sense of observation; a stranger at once discovers and is impressed by what one familiar with such scenes passes over with indifference. The only requisite for describing the people is a love for the people; and that we claim to possess, without the least political intention. We shall try and make our humble heroes live; and that is as much as anyone can undertake.

Many writers have of course joined us; until our manifesto was published, they did not dare to confess that they hated the so-called fashionable literature and the would-be subtle cant it had come to employ. Our movement was for them a kind of deliverance, and this, we are proud to say, proves that we have performed a useful piece of work.

Of course, we do not in the least imagine that we are extraordinary writers, and that nothing worth reading had been written before we entered the lists. But we feel sure that a man of genius will come who will bear a new message to the next generation, whose work will open up new paths in the field of Fiction and direct the literary activities of France into new and wider channels.

In the meantime, we contend that novelists should not exclusively deal with characters belonging to the well-to-do classes and to what is termed Society; we think, rather, that the humble, praiseworthy lives of workmen, peasants and

middle-class people should absorb their whole attention. (\*)

The only way to get rid of the baneful influence of the day is to utilize, with an earnest desire for truth, the numerous resources afforded by a study of the working classes. It was for the express purpose of urging writers to return to this tradition that we wrote the manifesto of populism. And because our literary group did not consider itself a separate school, it has already rallied together most of the novelists who, according to our motto, wish to write "truthful rather than weird stories."

The time has come to draw public attention to the excesses of a literature which, dealing with nothing but exceptional and objectionable psychological cases, without any regard to truth, seems to have enslaved the whole caste of fashionable writers.

Populism has for its sole aim the encouragement of novelists in widening the field of their investigations. Literature can be rejuvenated only by realism, by evincing an active interest in the social aspect of man, whatever his rank and surroundings may be.

It is not for us to say whether this movement is solely applicable to France, or whether it may be extended to other countries.

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(\*) May the Editor be permitted to quote the following apposite lines from Emerson?

"The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of the household life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign—is it not?—of new vigor, when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and feet. I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provençal minstrelsy. I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds."

## POEM 31

by

Vincent Huidobro

*A properly managed calvary  
Calls for a first-class twilight  
A sea demure as a peeping flower  
With water that you love to touch*

*No holes in the sheets of heaven  
And as a foot-warmer  
The road of tresses to the shore of the  
earth  
And the steam of eyes*

*Jesus Jesus  
Your eyes were as big as two  
soldiers  
You shall have a bouquet of flowers  
To put in your heart*

*In your heart visible to all comers  
Like a pocket in a tunic*

*You shall have a box of chocolate*

*I love you standing on the smoke of prayers  
I love you lying on ingratiitudes  
I love you sitting on the rocks of heaven  
You shall have the Legion of Honor.*

(Translated from the French by Samuel Putnam.)

# THE EPHEMERA

## PHANTASMAGORIA

by

Roger Vitrac

*(As the curtain rises, the stage is in darkness and absolute silence. The ephemera's wings are heard, while a very perceptible, very small and very distant light, on the left, varies in intensity with the winged vibrations of the insect. A nameless, monotonous voice is heard. A very high-pitched bell appropriately tinkles.)*

THE VOICE: Is it not the sound of a volcano, or that of a growing Liana? The armored-cruiser "Ariane" fires on the Ile du Levant. A palm-tree walks upon the sea. It is a good-sized geyser, escorted by dolphins and prisoner of my ordered gaze: these scrolls of the heart, this tobacco, this stretch of blue.

*(Gleams like those of heat-lightning cross the stage. The ephemera vibrates with the light, and the bell keeps on tinkling.)*

THE VOICE: The Marines are firing on the

## THIS QUARTER

echoes. The echoes do not answer. And the bird tinkles, tinkles as he will never sing.

*(The bird tinkles no more.)*

A WOMAN'S VOICE: What are you saying, sir?

THE VOICE: Alas! the bird tinkles no longer.

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: Does not the train pass here?

THE VOICE: Of what train are you speaking, madam?

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: Of the light-train of the star. Everyone will come. It is the last show of the summer. Tonight, a new star shall enter the sight of men.

THE VOICE: Has it been baptized?

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: How could it be? No one knows its color or its form.

*(A burst of laughter is heard.)*

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: Are you laughing?

THE VOICE: It is not I, it is the ephemera.

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: But when we have seen it, we shall find a name for it, right enough.

THE VOICE: Star of laughter, star of laughter. Call it the star of laughter.

THE WOMAN'S VOICE: Blasphemous! Stars do not laugh, they fall.

*(The bird tinkles one last time. The noise of the ephemera grows until it becomes like the whirr of a motor, while the light grows progressively more brilliant until it becomes blinding. On the stage, among trees, flowers and birds, there then appears a motionless mob, facing the audience. A piercing whistle is heard.)*

SOMEONE: Is it not another sun?

*(Whistle, then, eclipse [repeated three times].)*

*(After this lifeless ceremony, a man speaks.)*



ROGER VITRAC

THE MAN: Nothing speaks here any more. Why must the sky still speak? Let this be the last star.

*(A woman speaks.)*

THE WOMAN: What is this fool saying? It is the sky that *was* silent. Was it not their idea to give it our eyes? And now it beats and breathes. Soon they will give it our jewels. But if they give it their apparatus, beware. So, let it be the first star.

*(A child speaks.)*

THE CHILD: Oh my father, you who are the greatest of astronomers, I pray you to inform me of the celestial mechanism, for that shall be my star.

A VOICE: Wretch. Do you reject your own?

THE CHILD: Two stars are not too many.

THE VOICE: What will you call it?

THE CHILD: It will call me.

THE MAN: This child is right. What is more, he is my son, he is a poet. May he keep the star and care for it. As for me, I reserve the right to be its godfather. And so I name it the ephemera.

THE WOMAN: For a planet, that is ridiculous.

THE CHILD: And why, if you please? Am I not to be immortal, I, too?

*(Upon the dazzling background of the stage, there suddenly appears a black spot which grows until it takes the shape and size of an ostrich feather.)*

ALL: We won't have it. Is that the ephemera? What a disillusion. It is an ostrich feather. We want a star.

THE CHILD: You are stupid. Good-bye.

*(He takes the feather, sticks it in his hat, disappears.)*

*(The mother gives a loud cry. The father rushes over to support her.)*

## THIS QUARTER

SOMEONE: His son is dead. Good for him. An old astronomer should not go wrong on a star.

SOMEONE ELSE: No, especially when he has a family, you see.

*(The stage is instantly empty, and is suddenly invaded by the ghosts of objects. It is completely filled with armor, tools, furniture, machines, columns, plants. There is a marvellous confusion of potential images, superimposed and interpenetrating in all directions. Center-stage, and as though suspended in the air, a bugle to his lips, appears a Zouave, clad in pre-war uniform. Off-stage, syncopated drum-beats are heard. From the bugle comes a very shrill music, a sort of flute tremolo. The child crosses the stage, head dropped, then turns to the Zouave.)*

THE CHILD: Who are you?

THE ZOUAVE: Me? You are a child.

*(He goes on with his music.)*

THE CHILD: You are a shadow, you are.

THE ZOUAVE *(shouting)*: Me? I am life.

THE CHILD: Your bugle is unbearable. Its warrior tones do not awe me. Keep still, Arab. Listen, rather, to the rising din.

*(The drum-beats increase.)*

THE CHILD: Listen. How can they play with the air that way? We hear it and we don't. What are they?

THE ZOUAVE: They are the butterflies. The pretty butterflies *(and following the rhythm of the drums)* The but-ter-flies. The but-ter-flies. The but-ter-flies.

THE CHILD: Say there, bugler. Are you trying to imitate them now? You whose deep voice sounds

ROGER VITRAC

like a drum. (*He draws from his pocket a champagne-glass.*)

THE CHILD: Look at this wildflower. It has twelve joined petals. It cannot be stripped without being ruffled, and I put it in my pocket, where it folds up like a handkerchief. Have you seen that?

THE ZOUAVE: Do not play the Zouave, my lad. Think of making a go of your life. Our passage on this earth is ephemeral enough.

THE CHILD: No doubt, but look at this feather.

THE ZOUAVE: It is a pretty star, but it is black. You should have it dyed.

THE CHILD: I'll think about it.

*(The drum beats have begun again, accompanied by a military fanfare.)*

THE ZOUAVE: Now is the moment. Blood is flowing on the frontiers.

THE CHILD: But maybe red ink. Don't you think? Maybe we could light it up with a bit of chromium. In days gone by I would have planted it among the poppies. But supposing I prefer to have it remain black.

*(Drum and music stop. The scene changes. The child is seated in a corner and looks at the back of the stage. As he speaks, what he says takes place on the stage.)*

THE CHILD: A water-line

Laden with sleeping women

Is it not the most beautiful of hori-  
[zons?

ONE OF THE WOMEN (*coming down from the line and lying at the feet of the child*): Here I am.

THE CHILD: What does the horizon want of me? Madam, return to your saddle. You have just ruined the temple.

## THIS QUARTER

THE SAME WOMAN: You'll miss me, for my name was Ephemera.

THE CHILD: You are mistaken, I shall never miss you. (*Theatrically.*) Never. (*Aside.*) Because I knew it.

(*The raft of women disappears.*)

THE CHILD (*in a loud cry*): Ephemera!

(*At this moment, there appears, diamond-engraved in a beautiful English script upon a great foil-less mirror dropped from above, Ephemera. The inscription grows immeasurably larger, invades the whole theatre, overflows it. Then there remains only the center of the word, only a letter, only a hook, only a line, which occupies the entire width of the stage, and at last, only the infinitely-multiplied representation of the microscopic enlargement of a point.*)

(*It is a sort of dark glass quarry in which the reflections of two men are seated upon reflections of chairs. That is to say that everything is suggested upon the stage only by the ordinarily brilliant parts; the lights for objects, the shiny parts for the characters. The child enters this strange domain, upon a horse of which only the mane and the vapor of the nostrils are visible.*)

THE CHILD: Excuse me, sirs; I have followed through to the bottom of my heart where the name of a sleeping woman is engraved. It is therefore here that she must lie at rest.

FIRST REFLECTION: Of whom are you speaking?

THE CHILD: I do not know her. I forgot her name while following her.

SECOND REFLECTION: From what country is she?

THE CHILD: She travels upon a water-line.

ROGER VITRAC

FIRST REFLECTION: Here the women travel only on diamond-points.

THE CHILD: Is it not the same thing?

FIRST REFLECTION: Yes, of course, it is precisely the same thing. So, how should you recognize her among our women?

THE CHILD: Show me your women, sir. I should know her in a thousand.

FIRST REFLECTION: Alas! there are many more than that here.

*(From above descend an infinity of absolutely identical "dancing Dervishes." Shots, shouts, songs, sobs are alternately heard.)*

SECOND REFLECTION: Choose, my lad.

THE CHILD: That is not easy. It is neither this one, nor that one, nor that other, nor you, nor you, nor your charm, nor your eyes, nor your feet, nor anything, because after all there is nothing here that looks like the one I am seeking.

FIRST REFLECTION: We are indeed sorry.

THE CHILD: But what now, sir. Your face is changing. You are getting pale. You are losing your outline. You had only that to keep you alive. What will you have left?

SECOND REFLECTION: Nothing. As you so patly observe we are about to die.

THE CHILD: To die. But why?

FIRST REFLECTION: It is thus every evening. You are among the Ephemeras, here.

THE CHILD: Ephemera! That is she. *(He exits and is about to shut the door.)*

SECOND REFLECTION *(calling him back)*: Hey, lad. Do not be an ingrate. Do not kill us yet. Leave us a little light. Don't close the door as you leave, night will take care of that.

*(The scene changes. The child appears upon*

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*a road upon which there grows an achene  
with giant dandelion-winglets. The child  
sits down in its shadow which is very bright.  
All around him, each winglet projects rays.)*

THE CHILD: Let us reflect. The Ephemera. I have so left my heart behind me after this trip among the reflections, that I have scarcely a mind for reflection. And I play on words.

*(A winglet detaches itself and immediately  
takes the form of a parasol that disappears  
in the sky.)*

THE CHILD: The Ephemera again, with its crown of lashes. They are coming up in my throat. Ha-choo. They stand on my head, like a silk hat. The brain is listening to you, little parachute of seed.

*(Enter a philosopher. He has the head of a  
man and the body of a lion.)*

THE CHILD: What is this monster?

THE PHILOSOPHER: I am the great philosopher Duo. I am seeking the great principle of contrary dualities.

THE CHILD: Well; you yourself offer a fine example of the synthesis of your system.

THE PHILOSOPHER: I have a lion's body but I have not its head. And if I have the philosopher's head, I have not his body. I would like to find the formula, the word that would break this painful enchantment. One would have to solder the cause to its consequences; to unite the mother cause with its effects; to discover a sort of mother cause for what makes the day fly...

THE CHILD: But you have it, sir... ephemera.

*(At these words, the philosopher divides into  
two parts. A lion exists, right; a terrified  
man, left. The child laughs loudly, shaking*



ROGER VITRAC

*the stem of the achene from which a flock of parasols arise. A hunter appears.)*

THE HUNTER: You have just scared up a flock of wild duck, my lad. They will not return. This means ruin for hunters.

THE CHILD: Reassure yourself, sir, these are not wild duck. They are Burgundian phœnixes.

THE HUNTER: Ah, quite so. I thought I saw a flock of parasols. (*Exit.*)

THE CHILD: I have gone much too far, much too far. I shall go back home.

*(The scene changes. The child crosses a forest where the ephemera is buzzing.)*

THE CHILD (*humming*): Am I not dressed to suit you.

Sword on side

Feather in hat.

*(The buzz of the ephemera increases.)*

Woman is fickle

Light as a feather...

*(The buzz increases all the more.)*

A water-line

Laden with sleeping women

Is it not the most beautiful of horizons?

Yes, I am right, a thousand times right.

There is too much ephemera.

And the ephemera is too timid.

Its timidity is death.

Let us consult the ephemerides.

My father can draw splendid ones.

I shall go back home.

*(The scene changes to represent the astronomer's house. The mother is alone, in front of a music-rack. She is playing a soundless violin.)*

THE MOTHER (*letting the bow fall wearily*): It is

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certainly a misfortune for us home-keeping women to have such beautiful children that a star takes them from us. The last one was not yet fifteen. He died of a blood-clot on the forehead.

THE FATHER (*entering*): The star has died. There is no more ephemera.

THE MOTHER: What's that you say?

THE FATHER: There is no more ephemera, do you understand? Our son, linked to the destiny of a star, died in quite a regular manner at the moment when the star went out. The phenomenon must have lasted fifteen years. I was surprised at so sudden a death. On the contrary, there is reason only to rejoice in it, since it verifies my calculations. Hail, then, to the infallible heavens. Hail to the neighbor of Altair, who saw the black feather of the ephemera come to life and die.

(*Enter the son.*)

THE CHILD: Hello, here I am.

THE MOTHER: My child.

THE FATHER: You! then the ephemera did not die? One moment, please. I shall go up to my astronomical tower to verify my equations. But beware, my son. If I am not mistaken, you are merely a whiff.

(*Exit the Father.*)

THE CHILD: But it's me.

THE MOTHER: Where do you come from, my little one?

THE CHILD: How can it be told, mother? Linked to the ephemera, I sought it everywhere. The most beautiful sleeper, the feather, the diamond, the winged achene.

THE MOTHER: What are you saying?

THE CHILD: Look.

THE MOTHER: I see nothing.

ROGER VITRAC

THE CHILD: Press your finger upon the cornea of your eye. Press harder. What do you see?

THE MOTHER: I see a great blue lake falling in the middle of the dining-room.

THE CHILD: That's it.

*(A great blue lake falls from above.)*

THE MOTHER: My poor child, these travels have completely unbalanced you.

THE CHILD: A water-line

Laden with sleeping women

Is it not the most beautiful of hori-  
[zons?

THE MOTHER *(opening the window)*: Here is the most beautiful horizon. It was constructed by your mother's eyes.

THE CHILD: Between my father and you, I shall take the ephemera for a guide.

*(Enter the Father.)*

THE MOTHER: Ingrate.

THE FATHER *(to the child)*: Come here.

THE CHILD: What for?

THE FATHER: I say come here. Obey. Or else...

THE CHILD: Or else?

THE FATHER: My figures are correct. The ephemera died yesterday at two hours, thirty-one minutes, forty and three-tenths seconds past noon.

THE CHILD: You made a mistake of a few moments, papa.

*(The child tears off his feather and immediately turns into a gigantic ephemera that flies across the room. The terrified mother has fallen to her knees. The father pursues it, throwing at it everything he can put his hands upon. At last he hits it, and the monster falls.)*

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THE MOTHER: There, you killed him. Now what are you going to do?

THE FATHER (*going toward his desk*): Well, I will write the epitaph: Here lies the ephemera, that wished to be, that was, and did not know it was.

*(The scene changes to represent an enormous eye with a closing lid.)*

A VOICE: What is this pared nail that falls? this smoke...

*(Sound of bells...)*

CURTAIN

*(Translated from the French by Harold J. Salemson.)*



Drawing, by O. Zhadkine.





# CHRISTINE

by

Julian Green

*"She was a phantom of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely apparition sent  
To be a moment's ornament."*

WORDSWORTH.

## I

The Fort Hope road runs almost exactly parallel to the black lines of the reefs from which it is separated by bands of bare, flat ground. A dull sky hangs heavy over the cheerless landscape, which is unrelieved by the bright colors of any vegetation except, in places, the faint green of a languishing grass. In the distance can be seen a long, glittering, gray line—the sea.

We were in the habit of spending the summer there in a house built on an eminence, at some distance back from the road. In America, where antiquity is of recent date, the house was considered very ancient; and as a matter of fact, there was an inscription in the center of the front-elevation certifying that it had been built in 1640, at the time when the Pilgrims, at the points of their muskets, were establishing the Kingdom of God in these barbarous regions. Firmly set in the natural

## THIS QUARTER

rock, it opposed to the frenzy of the winds which blew from the sea solid walls of smooth stone and a rudimentary gable which made one think of the prow of a ship. Below the little round window in the gable, these words could be read, carved up in Rhode Island flint, the hardest material in the world: *In God We Trust*.

There is not an aspect of the old Puritan house of which my mind has not kept a distinct image, not a piece of furniture the secrets and defects of which my hand could not find without hesitation; and I should experience, I think, the same joys as those of former days, as well as the same terrors, in following the long corridors with their arched ceilings, and in reading again above those doors which a child could move only with difficulty, the mottoes, in Old English lettering, taken from the Book of Psalms.

I remember that all the rooms were so spacious that they seemed empty and that in them the human voice had a sound which it did not have in the city, in the apartment where we lived in Boston. Was it an echo? The voice seemed to strike against the walls and you had the impression that someone beside you was repeating the last part of what you had just said. It amused me at first. When I mentioned it to mother, she advised me to pay no attention to it; but I had occasion to observe that, in this house, she herself spoke less than was usual with her, and in a more subdued voice.

## II

The summer of my thirteenth year was marked by a rather peculiar incident, so distressing that I have never been able to bring myself to attempt

## JULIAN GREEN

a clearing-up of the entire mystery, for it seems to me that there must have been a larger element of pathos in it than I thought at the time. Is it not better sometimes not to attempt to seek out the truth? And if such prudence is not always commendable, it certainly is wiser in cases such as the one I am about to relate than an audacious spirit of investigation.

I was nearly thirteen years old when mother announced to me, one August morning, the arrival of Aunt Judith. The latter was a more or less enigmatic person whom we almost never saw, for the reason that she lived at a great distance from us, in Washington. I knew that she had had a very unhappy life and that, for some unexplained reason, she had not been able to marry. I was not fond of her. Her fixed stare made me lower my eyes, and she had a gloomy manner which I did not like. Her features were as regular as my mother's, but more severe, and a singular expression of displeasure kept the corners of her mouth continually raised in a bitter half-smile.

Going down to the parlor a few days later, I found my aunt in conversation with mother. She had not come alone; a little girl of about my own age was at her side, but with her back to the light, so that at first I was unable to distinguish her features. My aunt seemed vexed to see me and, turning abruptly to my mother, she uttered a few rapid words which I did not catch. Then she touched the shoulder of the little girl, who took a step forward and dropped me a curtsy.

"Christine," said mother, "this is my little boy. His name is John. John, shake hands with Christine and kiss your aunt."

As I approached Christine, I had to restrain

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myself in order not to give vent to a cry of admiration. Beauty—even at the age I then was—always has aroused in me the most powerful and most diverse feelings. The result is a sort of internal struggle which makes me pass, in the space of a single moment, from joy to desire and from desire to despair. And so it is, I hope, and at the same time fear, to discover that beauty which I know will torment and delight me; I seek it out, but with a painful anxiety, and with the secret hope that I shall not find it. Christine's beauty transported me. With the light to her back, her eyes seemed black, being rendered larger by the shadows about the lids. The forceful lines of her mouth stood out strongly in the lacklustre and the spotless perfection of her skin. An immense aureole of blonde hair seemed to gather up in its depths all the light which came from the window, giving an almost supernatural color to her cheeks and forehead. I gazed in silence at that little girl whom I should have been ready to believe an apparition, if I had not already grasped in mine the hand which she extended to me. My stare did not cause her to lower her eyes; she seemed, in fact, not to see me, but to be fixing her gaze obstinately upon someone or something behind me. That impression was borne in upon me so strongly that I turned around. Mother's voice brought me back to myself and I kissed my aunt, who then withdrew with Christine.

Even today it is difficult for me to believe that the events which I am about to relate actually happened; nevertheless, my memory is trustworthy, and I am inventing nothing. I never saw Christine again or, in any case, I saw her only once or twice more, and under the most unsatisfactory circumstances. My aunt came downstairs without

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Christine. We took our meal without her; the afternoon passed, and she did not return to the parlor.

Toward evening mother sent for me and told me that I was to sleep, not on the second floor as I had, up to that time, but on the third, which was far from the guest-chambers where Christine and my aunt were. I cannot tell what took place within me. I should have been willing to believe that I had had a dream. With what joy I should have learned that it was all only an illusion, and that the little girl I thought I had seen did not exist! For otherwise, it would have been cruel to think that she should be living in the same house with me, and that I should be deprived of the opportunity of seeing her.

I begged mother to tell me why Christine had not come down to lunch, but she immediately assumed a serious manner, and replied that I had no need to know, and that I was never to mention Christine again to anyone. These strange instructions amazed me, and I wondered for a moment which of us, mother or myself, had lost our senses. I turned what she had said over in my mind, but without being able to arrive at any other explanation than a malicious desire on mother's part to torment me.

At dinner, my mother and aunt, that I might not be able to understand, began to speak in French, a language they knew well, but of which I did not understand a word. I did realize, however, that they were talking about Christine, for her name occurred rather often in their conversation. Finally, yielding to my impatience, I bluntly asked what had become of the little girl and why she did not appear at either lunch or dinner. The answer came in the form of a box on the ear from my mother,

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who took that method of reminding me of the orders she had given me. As for my aunt, she frowned in a way which rendered her in my eyes very awful to look upon. I said no more.

Who, then, was the little girl? Had I been more observing and not quite so young, I should certainly have noticed the peculiarity of her expression. Was I not already familiar with that fixed stare? Had I seen no one with that indefinable grimace which resembled a smile and yet was not? But I was thinking of quite another thing than studying my aunt's face, and I was too innocent to discover a relationship between Christine and this woman who, at the time, seemed monstrous to me.

### III

I shall pass rapidly over the two weeks that followed, in order to come at once to the most curious part of the story. The reader will be able to picture without difficulty all the tediousness of my solitude, which, formerly so tranquil, had now become unendurable, and my sorrow at feeling myself separated from one for whom, I felt, I should willingly have sacrificed my life. Several times, while I was wandering about the house, the idea occurred to me to attract Christine's attention and make her come to the window, but I had no sooner thrown some pebbles up against her window than a harsh voice would call me back into the parlor. A strict watch was kept over me and my plan always failed.

I underwent a change, I became sombre, and no longer took any pleasure in anything. I could not even read or undertake anything which required sustained attention. I was obsessed by a single



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idea—to see Christine again. I arranged things so as to be on the stairs when mother, my aunt, or Dinah the maid passed, carrying Christine her luncheon or her dinner. Of course I was not allowed to follow them, but I experienced a melancholy pleasure in listening to the sound of those steps which went up to her.

My aunt was displeased at this innocent manoeuvre and she suspected in me, I think, more serious intentions than I myself was conscious of. One evening she told me an awful story concerning that part of the house which she occupied with Christine. She confided to me that she had seen someone pass by, close to her, in the hall which led to their room. Was it a man or a woman? She could not say, but she was sure of one thing: she had felt a warm breath against her face. And then, for some moments, she had watched my expression attentively, as if to measure the effect of her words upon me. I must have turned pale under her gaze. It was easy to terrify me with such tales; and this one seemed horrible to me, for my aunt had planned her story well, being careful to tell me neither too much nor too little. And so, far from thinking of going as far as Christine's room, I hesitated, from that time on, even to venture upon the stairs after nightfall.

From the time my aunt arrived mother had formed the habit of sending me to Fort Hope every afternoon, giving as an excuse that she wanted me to buy a newspaper there; but, in reality, I am sure that it was to get me away from the house at an hour when Christine was to go out for a walk.

Things remained thus for two long weeks. I lost my color, and purple shadows began to appear around my eyes. Mother looked at me closely when

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I went to see her in the morning; and occasionally, seizing me abruptly by the wrist, she would say to me, in a voice which trembled a little:—

“Wretched child!”

But her anger and her sadness did not move me. All I cared about was Christine.

The vacation was drawing to a close, and I had lost all hope of ever seeing her again, when an event which I did not expect gave an unforeseen turn to the adventure and, at the same time, brought it to a sudden end.

One evening, at the beginning of September, we had a thunderstorm after a day of overwhelming heat. The first drops of rain were splashing against the windows as I went upstairs to my room, and it was then, while on my way from the second to the third floor, that I heard a peculiar noise, which I can compare to nothing but the roll of a drum. My aunt's story came back to my mind and I began to dash rapidly up the stairs, when all at once, I was stopped by a loud cry. It was neither mother's voice nor my aunt's, but a voice so piercing, so high, so strange in tone, that it made me think of the call of an animal. A sort of dizziness laid hold of me. I leaned against the wall. For nothing in the world would I have taken a step backward, but it was equally impossible for me to go on, and I remained where I was, senseless from terror. A moment later, the noise redoubled in violence; and then I understood that it was someone, Christine beyond a doubt, who, for reasons which I did not understand, was pounding upon a door with her fists. Finally, I mustered sufficient courage, not to find out what it was and go to Christine's aid, but rather to dash upstairs as fast as I could. Once in my room, imagining that I still heard the roll of a

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drum and the same cry of a moment before, I fell on my knees and, stuffing my fingers in my ears, began to pray aloud.

### IV

The next morning, in the parlor, I found my aunt in tears and my mother beside her, talking to her and holding her hands in hers. They both seemed greatly excited and did not notice me. I did not fail to take advantage of circumstances which seemed so promising for finally learning something about what had happened to Christine, for they must be talking about her; so I stealthily took a seat just behind them. In that way I found out, in a few moments, that the storm of the night before had had a very serious effect upon the little girl. Seized with terror at the first rumblings of thunder, she had called, tried to get out of her room, and finally had fainted away.

"I ought never to have brought her here," exclaimed my aunt. And she added, without connecting up what she said, and in a tone of voice which I cannot describe, as though the words were killing her, "She tried to *say* something to me!"

I was in my room two hours later when mother entered with a long Paisley shawl and the hood she wore when she was going out. I had never seen her look so grave.

"John," she said, "Christine, the little girl you saw the day your aunt arrived, is not very well, and we are anxious about her. Listen. We are both going to Providence this afternoon to consult a doctor, and we are going to bring him back here with us. Christine is to remain here, and Dinah will look after her. Will you promise me that you

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will not go near Christine's room while we are away?"

I promised.

"It is a very serious matter, but I trust you," she continued, looking at me suspiciously. "Will you swear to me on the Bible that you will not go upstairs while we are gone?"

I nodded. Shortly after lunch, mother and my aunt departed.

My first impulse was to go up to Christine's room immediately; but after a moment's reflection, I hesitated, for I was inclined to keep my word. Finally, the temptation became too strong and, after making sure that Dinah, who had carried Christine her lunch an hour before, had really gone back to the kitchen, I went up to the second floor.

When I reached the haunted hall, or rather, the hall Aunt Judith had claimed was haunted, my heart began to beat violently. It was a long hall, with several turns, and very dark. Over the entrance there was a Biblical inscription which at that moment took on a special meaning in my mind: *Yea, though I walk in the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil.* That verse, which I read mechanically, recalled to me the fact that I had given my word of honor not to do what I was doing at that very moment. I had not, however, sworn upon the Bible and my conscience was for that reason somewhat appeased.

I had gone scarcely three or four feet before I had to do my utmost to control my imagination, in order not to retrace my steps, as a result of my excessive fright. The thought that I would, perhaps, see the little girl again and touch her hand once more kept up my courage. I began to run on my

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toes, holding my breath, frightened by the length of that interminable corridor; and since I could no longer see my way before me, in a moment I ran headlong into Christine's door. In my excitement, I did not think of knocking, but I tried to open the door. It was locked. I could hear Christine walking about in the room. Upon hearing the noise I made, she had come over toward the door. I waited, hoping that she would open it, but she stopped and remained still.

In vain I knocked, gently at first, then more and more loudly. I called Christine, I spoke to her, I told her that I was Aunt Judith's nephew, that I had a message for her, and that she must open the door. Finally, giving up hope of any reply, I knelt down before the door and looked through the keyhole. Christine was standing some distance away, watching the door attentively. She wore a long nightdress that fell to her feet: I could see her bare toes beneath it. Her hair, no longer held in place by any comb, spread about her head like a mane. I noticed that her cheeks were flushed. Her eyes, of a brilliant blue in the light that struck her face, held that motionless stare which I had not forgotten; and the singular feeling came over me that she could see through the wood of the door, and that she was watching me. She looked even more beautiful than I had believed, and I was beside myself at seeing her so near and not being able to throw myself at her feet. Finally, overcome by an emotion so long contained, I suddenly burst into tears and, striking my head against the door, gave myself up to despair.

After a certain length of time, an idea came to my mind which brought back my courage, an idea which I considered ingenious, for the reason that

## THIS QUARTER

its imprudence did not then occur to me. I scrawled in big letters on a piece of paper:—

“Christine, open the door for me. I love you.”

And I slipped it under the door.

Looking through the keyhole, I saw her fall upon the paper and turn it over and over in every direction, with an air of great curiosity, but without appearing to understand what I had written on it. All at once she dropped it, and went into a part of the room where my glance could not follow her. In my distraction, I called to her as loudly as I could and, without realizing any longer what I was saying, promised to give her a present if she would consent to open the door. Those words, which came to me on the spur of the moment, gave me an idea, a new scheme.

As hastily as I could, I went upstairs to my room and hunted about in the drawers of my bureau to find something which I could use as a present; but I had nothing. I then dashed into mother's room and went carefully through the contents of all her chests of drawers, but I saw nothing there, either, which seemed to me worthy of Christine. Finally, I perceived, pushed up against the wall and behind a piece of furniture, the trunk that my aunt had brought with her. Doubtless they had thought that it would not be safe in the same room with a curious little girl. In any case, the trunk happened to be unlocked and I had only to raise the lid to plunge into it my fevered hands. After searching for some time, I discovered a little shark-skin case, carefully hidden under some linen. How well I remember it! Lined with watered silk, it contained some colored ribbons and a few rings, to one of which I took a liking at once. It was a very slender gold ring with a small sapphire. A



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roll of letters had been passed through it like a paper finger, and I pulled them out, tearing them in the process.

I went back immediately to Christine's room and called to her again, but with no other result than to make her come close to the door as she had done the first time. Then I slipped the ring under the door, saying:—

"Christine, here is your present. Open the door for me."

And I knocked with the palm of my hand on the bottom of the door to attract her attention. She had, however, already seen the ring and seized it. For a moment she held it in the hollow of her hand, examining it. Then she tried to put it on her thumb, but the ring was too small and caught a little below the nail. She stamped her foot and tried to force it on. I cried to her:—

"No! Not on that finger!"

But either she did not hear me, or she did not understand. She suddenly waved her hand; the ring had gone on. She gazed at it in admiration for a few minutes and then tried to take it off. She pulled with all her might, but in vain; the ring resisted. Then she bit it with rage. Finally, after a series of desperate efforts to dislodge it, she threw herself on the bed with loud and angry cries.

I fled.

When, three hours later, my mother and my aunt returned, accompanied by a doctor from Providence, I was in my room, a prey to a nameless terror. I did not dare go downstairs at dinner-time, and when darkness came, I dropped off to sleep.

## THIS QUARTER

### V

Toward five o'clock the next morning, a noise of wheels awoke me and drew me to the window, and I saw a two-horse carriage pulling up before our door. Everything that happened after that gave me the impression of being a nightmare. I saw the maid help the coachman load my aunt's trunk on the top of the carriage; then my aunt appeared, supported by mother. They kissed several times. A man followed them—I suppose it was the doctor from Providence, who had spent the night at our house—holding Christine by the hand. She wore a great hood which concealed her face, and on the thumb of her right hand glittered the ring she had been unable to remove.

Neither mother nor my aunt—I saw the latter again, without Christine, some months later—had a word to tell me about the whole affair, and I actually came to fancy that I had dreamed it. It may be hard to believe, but I had forgotten it all. The human heart is a strange thing, indeed.

The following summer, my aunt did not come on; but a few days before Christmas, as she was passing through Boston, she stopped over to see us for an hour. Mother and I were in the parlor, and I was looking out the window, watching the city men throwing shovelfuls of sand upon the icy sidewalks, when my aunt suddenly made her appearance. She paused a moment on the parlor threshold, mechanically removing her gloves. Then, without a word, she threw herself, sobbing, into mother's arms. On her ungloved hand shone the little sapphire.

Outside, the sand fell with mournful thuds upon the pavement.

# ADAPTATION

*of a Theme by Catullus: Carmen CI*

by

Allen Tate

*Through towns and states, by hills and rivers borne  
In the swift plane, brother, I've come today,  
A spirit, to linger at your spiritless clay  
That lies well-dressed beyond the reach of scorn:  
Not scorn, O lifeless ash, nor sorrow feel,  
Nor ever success nor health attend your way--  
Ah, vanity of speech, what should I say?  
The grave is quickly digged with prosperous zeal  
For Chance, the giver, betimes may swiftly take.  
Accept these costly wreaths for my own sake  
(Death asks no fee wherewith to let you in)  
And for the decent sense of heaven and hell:  
Take them, and think not much on mortal sin,  
For, brother, time being money, I say farewell.*

# LES SOIRÉES DE MÉDAN

## AN HISTORICAL NOTE

by

Léon Deffoux

In the ninth arrondissement of Paris, the house at 23 Rue Ballu has undergone no outward change since the day Zola went to live there in 1877 when that quiet street was still called the Rue de Boulogne.

Facing the street is a three-story building, its entrance a double portal composed of two large semicircular arches, a column one story high dividing and supporting them. This traffic-and-entry-way gives access for vehicles to the small sequestered summer-houses in the garden.

In Zola's apartment on the second floor, certain windows faced the Rue de Boulogne and others the garden. <sup>(1)</sup> The author of *Thérèse Raquin* lived there four months a year, during the winter. The

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(1) Paul Alexis describes this apartment thus: The romanticist of former years persists in the furnishings of the naturalist of today. Particularly in his apartment in the Rue de Boulogne, where he has been living since 1877, Zola has been able to realize early dreams. Nothing but stained glass, Henri II beds, Italian or Dutch pieces, antique Aubussons, old pewter, venerable pots of 1830... (Emile Zola, *Notes d'un ami*, p. 178.)

## LEON DEFFOUX

rest of the time he resided at Médan <sup>(2)</sup> where he always had his brickmasons to supervise.

Among the few people he saw was the little group of writers who had gathered around him when he still lived at 21 Rue St. Georges, (today Rue des Apennins, at Batignolles), and who now met again in his study every Thursday evening.

Maupassant, Huysmans, Céard, Hennique, and Alexis, one bringing the other, would dine together either at the Rue Coustou, at the corner of the Rue Puget, or in a little restaurant at 51 Rue Condorcet; after which they would repair to Zola's home, to end the evening talking over their plans and hopes. And it can truly be said that, despite its title, the collection called *Les Soirées de Médan* was conceived and executed in the Rue de Boulogne.

How did the six friends become acquainted?

Alexis, who was seven years younger than Zola, had heard the latter spoken of in Aix-en-Provence, at the *Collège Bourbon*, in 1857; his first visit to Paris, in 1869, was naturally enough a visit paid to "the son of the man who had built the canal at Aix," that same Zola who had already begun to make an impression with his first volume of the *Rougon-Macquart* series...

At Flaubert's house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, Zola had met Maupassant, then employed in the Ministry of the Marine.

Céard presented himself of his own accord, one Sunday in April, 1876, and from his account the meeting was not without its rather humorous side.

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(2) Médan is situated between Poissy and Triel. In 1878 Zola bought there for nine thousand francs the property on which he never ceased to make improvements. A monograph on Médan was written by Baron Jérôme Pichon in the *Bulletin du Bibliophile* in 1849. The property acquired by Zola was offered by his widow to the state for charitable purposes in 1903.

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According to his visiting card, he lived at 36 Rue Gallois, at Bercy. On reading the address printed on the card, Zola gathered that a local agent from the wholesale wine-dealer's had come to offer him samples. Although he was not in need of wine for his cellar, he went to receive the visitor. Having cleared up the blunder, Céard revealed the "literary" reasons for his visit. Zola invited him to come again, and added: "Your friends, too, are welcome."

Then Huysmans, whose *Marthe* had just been published, was brought along by his friend, and was received in the house to which Céard had been invited.

Finally, it was not long before Hennique, who had met Paul Alexis at the *République des Lettres* came to round out the little group that met on Sundays at the villa in Médan, the furnishings of which were as elaborate and as strangely assorted as those of the apartment in the Rue de Boulogne, providing some little amusement for Guy de Maupassant (3).



The treaty of Frankfort had been signed ten years before; books on the war were appearing on every side; Villemer and Delormel reigned supreme at the *café-concerts*; there was not a popular ballad

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(3) "...The dwelling, a square tower at the foot of which squats a microscopic house, like a dwarf walking along beside a giant, is situated along the Western line. Zola works in the middle of a tremendously large, high room. Windows opening on the fields light up all its vastness. And this huge study is hung with equally huge tapestries, and is crowded with furniture of every period and every country. Medieval armour, authentic or not, rubs shoulders with amazing Japanese pieces and graceful art-objects of the eighteenth century..." (Emile Zola by G. de Maupassant.)



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that did not end with a couplet on the theme of revenge: *La Ferme aux fraises*; *C'est un oiseau qui vient de France*; *Ils ont brisé mon violon...* the entire repertory of Amiati held sway at the street-corners. Today, we can quote only the titles of the novels and short stories inspired by such sentiments as these; but at that time, the works themselves were all too frequently quoted, and the six friends did not fail to take their fling at this type of literature. Out of this grew the original idea of publishing a book entirely different from those then in vogue. The realization of this project was the easier by reason of the fact that each of the six writers had a contribution ready.

*L'Attaque du Moulin* had already appeared in the *Messager de l'Europe*; *Sac-au-dos* by J. K. Huysmans had been published at Brussels, in Théodore Hanon's *Artiste*; Hennique had his story, *L'Attaque du grand Sept*; Alexis was working on his *Après la Bataille*; *La Saignée* had been published in *Slovo* at St. Petersburg; *Boule de Suif* alone was expressly written for the Charpentier edition.

Many titles were discarded before a satisfactory one was found.

*L'Invasion Comique* proposed by Huysmans was rejected for patriotic reasons... After many suggestions and discussions, they sentimentally and unanimously hit upon that bourgeois title, *Les Soirées de Médan*, for the reason that, as M. Céard informs us, "it embodied a tribute to the beloved house where Mme Zola had treated us like a mother and had taken pleasure in making great spoiled children of us all."

Nor was it any the less in keeping with the spirit of the group that it should have been at a special

## THIS QUARTER

dinner in Trapp's restaurant that they declared themselves openly by a joint manifestation.

Monday, the 16th of April 1877, at Maupassant's suggestion, the five, joined by Octave Mirbeau, invited Gustave Flaubert, Edmond de Goncourt and Emile Zola to a dinner at Trapp's, at the corner of the passage du Havre and the rue St. Lazare. This meeting was commented on with some asperity by the press. Fanciful menus were published in the style of the following, devised by the *République des Lettres*:

*Potage "purée Bovary"*  
*Truite saumonée à la "fille Elisa"*  
*Poularde truffée à la "Saint-Antoine"*  
*Artichauts au "Cœur simple"*  
*Parfait "naturaliste"*  
*Vin de "Coupeau"*  
*Liqueur de l' "Assommoir"*

Periodicals as well as newspapers scoffed at the five unknowns who claimed they were founding a new school of literature. A school? Well and good; all the clamour that arose about them led them to declare themselves, aggressively, its staunch adherents. Zola, always ready for a fight, was only too eager to reply for himself and for his friends (4). This he did in *Le Voltaire* and until 1879, this news-

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(4) Since 1860, Zola had had the idea of gathering round him a number of friends to form an "artistic" group. (See *Correspondence*, Book 1, p. 112. Letter to Baille, July, 1860). "...We will be the four founders," he wrote, "you two (Baille and Cézanne) Pajot and I. We will be very particular about admitting new members. Our weekly meetings, for instance, would be for exchanging any ideas we might have had. Above all, the purpose of this group would be to form a powerful alliance for the future,—to give us mutual support, whatever our status in the future may be..." The idea that he had not been able to carry out with the friends of his early days was destined to be partly realized by the group at Médan.

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paper, for the most part hospitable to the Naturalist group, defended the "doctrine," since "doctrine" it was... Finally, on the 17th of April, 1880, by way of launching the *Soirées*, Maupassant wrote an article in the *Gaulois*, the fanciful and rather mystifying nature of which was not understood and served to increase the scandal.

As early as 1879, *Le Voleur* had hit upon a phrase—startling if nothing more—to describe the new school launched by Zola. "It is spreading like an oil-stain," said this paper <sup>(5)</sup>, "and the master has trailing after him a tail that is getting longer every day."—"It's the extreme left wing of the ink well," exclaimed M. Jean Richepin in *Gil Blas* <sup>(6)</sup>, the day after the *Soirées de Médan* appeared, adding further that these writers had appropriated Flaubert "like the pig that claimed St. Anthony." Moreover, he taunted them with being ugly, not being able to find in them adequate physical charms. These gentle slams delighted the good-natured Flaubert. "Get this issue of *Gil Blas*" he wrote to his niece on April 29th, "In it, there is a criticism of the Zola set, by Richepin, that is perfect."

Some were alarmed for the fatherland, others for religion. Albert Wolff was naively alarmed by "the singular insolence of these presumptuous youngsters." Others waxed indignant and unceremoniously disposed of the six authors as scavengers and sewer-men. There were even those who were "witty" at their expense, such as Aurélien Scholl, who called Huysmans and Céard, Chouya and Boulou. This sort of pleasantry, quite without meaning today, led Alexis to call Scholl Monoclien

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(5) May 2, 1879.

(6) *Gil Blas*, April 22, 1881.

## THIS QUARTER

Tortonill, and to threaten the latter with a collection of Médan Plays, six of them with a one-line preface: "This is the theatre of the future." (7)

As a matter of fact, all these verbal assaults did the group no ill-turn; and this was exactly what Alexis declared in the same *Gil Blas* article.

"To these helpful enemies, thanks!" said he. "Have they not made our existence known to the world, drawn attention to our work, paved the way for our success?"

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Following this resounding start, those writers who might be called the Naturalists, to employ Zola's word, moved on the various futures. But from this time on, the individual personality of each of these authors as revealed in the stories of this collection, was to be made out.

However, the same artistic aims and a formula which, more than is generally supposed, they employed in common, kept them united in appearance; for it is always thus, from the belief that the individuals know and understand each other that the most enduring unions are formed. In any case, all felt the need for precise observation, in order to depict the society they worked with as it really was; and this became more apparent in the works that followed *les Soirées*. They brought to their labors the same concern for detail, the same underlying seriousness, and the same realism in drawing a character, i. e., a human being, with those passions, his habits and prejudices which had been imposed upon him from infancy up.

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(7) *Gil Blas*, April 22, 1881.

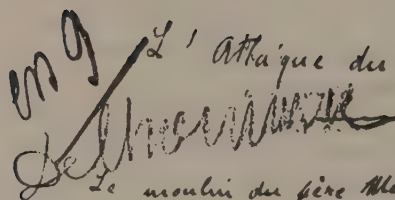
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This concern for detail, this realism, was at times, perhaps, carried too far; and this the *Revue moderne et naturaliste* itself took occasion to deplore. "Nothing escapes them," we read in this publication of Harry Allis, under date of December 14, 1878, "grease-spots on the arm chairs, the color and texture of the wall paper, hold no secrets for them. And if, by chance, they decide to proceed after having examined everything, it is only to begin again and in another place their minute investigations."

No doubt! But what records for those who wish to study the latter half of the XIXth century! From the end of the second Empire through the first twenty years of the Republic, these writers have catalogued every stratum of society, during a period when society was undergoing a complete transformation. They were determined to present a living record of their age. And if, in *Les Soirées de Médan* and their succeeding works, their over-emphasis on detail resulted, perhaps, in an over-accumulation of evidence,—human documents preserved with photographic persistence,—nevertheless, they have transmitted to us, in the way of information and typical aspects of that age, much that could not easily be found nor pieced together without them.

Is it not to works of the lesser figures,—a *Restif de la Bretonne*, for example,—that devotees of the XVIIIth century are wont to go to seek, amid what is for us today a mass of colorless pages and garrulous nonsense, the picturesque psychological aspects and the essential atmosphere of a period of transition?

(Translated from the French by Lillian Lowenfels.)


 L'Attaque des Moulins

Le moulin du père Merlier sur cette  
 belle soirée d'été, était en grande fête. Dans  
 la cour, on avait mis trois tables, plusieurs bancs  
 à bout, et qui attendaient les convives. Tout  
 le pays savait qu'on devait fêter, ce  
 jour-là, la fille Merlier, Françoise, avec  
 Dominique, un jeune garçon qu'on accusait de  
 faimée-murée, mais que la femme à trois liasses  
 à la ronde regardait avec des yeux rivaux,  
 tant il avait bon air.

Le moulin du père Merlier était une  
 vraie guêtière. Il se trouvait juste au mi-  
 lieu de Roussay, à l'endroit où la grand'rou-  
 te fait un coude. Le village n'a qu'une rue,  
 deux files de maisons, une file à chaque  
 bord de la route ; mais là, au coude, des pères s'att-



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en train de pleurer son mari et son père un million de  
renseignements financiers du marquis, il lui raconta gauchement  
de son épée, en criant;  
— Victoire ! victoire !

Emile Zola

The preceding two facsimiles represent the first and last of the 52 pages of the original manuscript of Emile Zola's *L'Attaque du Moulin*, which heads the famous *Les Soirées de Médan* series of classic war stories, published in 1880.

(In the Editor's collection.)

(Editor's Note. — The fiftieth anniversary of the *Soirées de Médan* is being observed this year, with a dinner of the faithful admirers of the Naturalist movement, on March 8. On April 12, the Comédie-Française is to give a "matinée poétique" devoted to the works of the *Soirées* authors. About the same time, the Odéon is putting on a revival of the *Jacques Damour* of Hennique, after Zola. Finally, the publishing house of Fasquelle is preparing for the spring a special anniversary edition of the *Soirées*.

The *Soirées de Médan* appeared in 1880. It was a collection of tales, all growing out of the then recent war, and included the *Attaque du Moulin* of Zola, the *Boule de Suif* of Maupassant, the *Sac-au-dos* of Huysmans, *La Saignée* of Céard, Hennique's *L'Affaire du Grand 7*, and Alexis' *Après la Bataille*. The preface to the *Soirées* may be regarded as the manifesto of this group of six. "The short stories which follow", we read there, "have been published before, some of them in France and others abroad. They have impressed us as springing from a common idea and as possessing a philosophy in common; and so, we bring them together here... We expect all sorts of attacks, all the bad faith and ignorance of which contemporary criticism already has given us so many examples. Our sole concern has been to make a public affirmation of our true alliances and, at the same time, of our literary tendencies." With this, it is interesting to contrast the *Figaro* manifesto of the five who broke away from Zola. Those interested in pursuing the subject further may be referred to an article by Doncieux, *Zola et ses élèves*, in the *Paris-Journal* of July 22, 1880.

Some one has remarked recently that no volume of scope similar to that of the *Soirées de Médan* has as yet come out of the World War.)

[S. P.]



# THE ROSE AND THISTLE

by

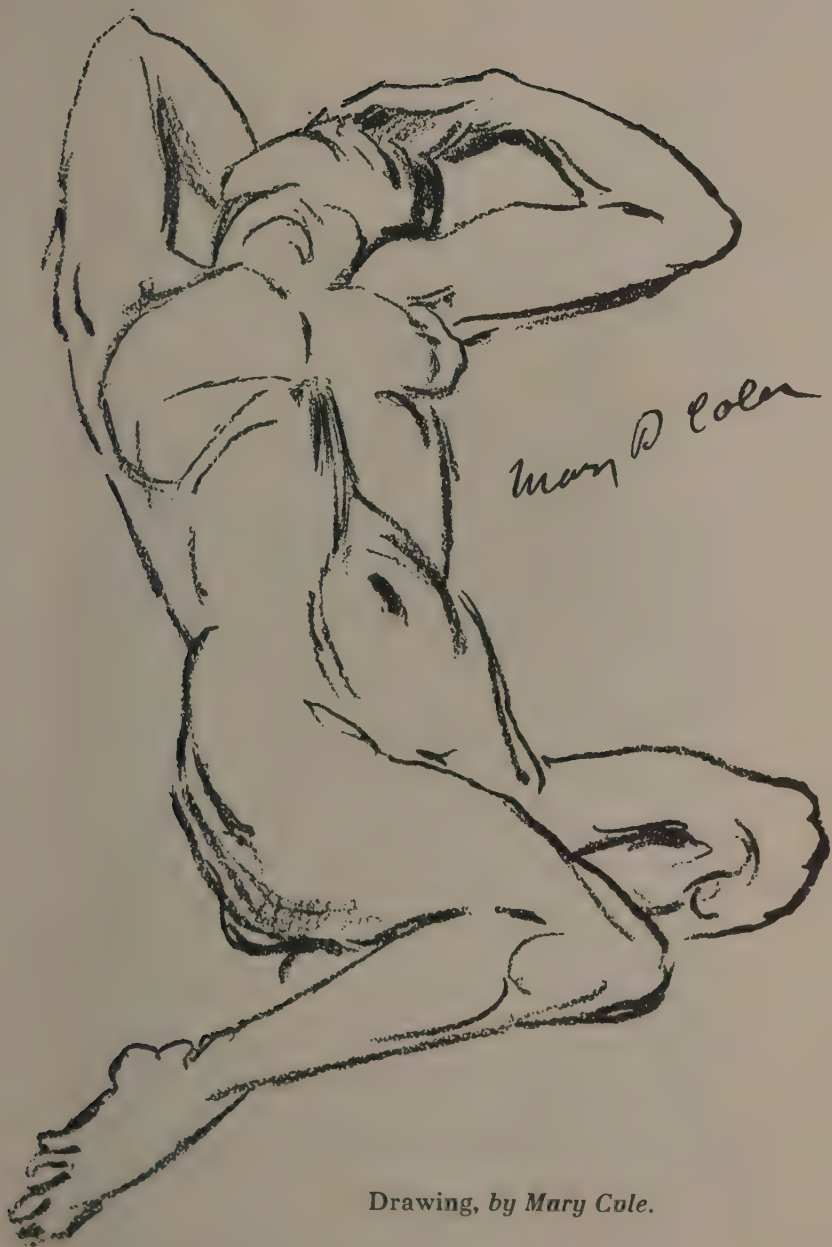
R. C. Dunning

*On a day when the four winds were silent  
And only the pines remembered their passing—  
The holy pontifical pines  
Secretly tossing their incense  
Stealthily sad in the sunlight—  
I saw how the clouds were like lazy thoughts  
Adrift in the brain of God  
And I smelt the sunshine  
And was happy and sang to myself  
A song I had learned in childhood.  
For in my heart, too, the four winds were silent  
And I sat by the road-side  
Between a forest and a field of wheat  
And solved for a moment my riddle.*

*But a bird piped in the bushes  
And a fish leapt in the hidden brook:  
So I withdrew my thoughts from the cloudlands  
And ideas of the infinite ether  
And saw before me a wild rose  
In the pathos of her passing beauty  
And beside her a thistle  
Mixing and mixed with her leaves  
And doubtless with roots intermingled.*

## THIS QUARTER

*Then being moved to action  
On a day when no action was intended  
I uprooted the thistle  
And cast it upon the road in the sun  
That it might surely die.  
Then I turned to the rose—  
(For in those days I spoke to the flowers  
And they answered with little messages,  
Tiny words like the calling of old playmates)  
But her petals were falling  
And she asked in the voice of a woman:  
“What have you done with my thistle?”  
Then I saw that I had played at fate  
And usurped the power of a god  
So I prayed to the soul of the rose:  
“Remember not the offense of my hands.”  
But the four winds awoke in my heart,  
The day darkened  
And my riddle returned.*



Drawing, by Mary Cole.





## THE FUNCTION OF THE TRANSLATOR OF POETRY

by

Edward W. Titus

Quality apart, there always have been and, doubtless, always will be held two views with respect to the task of the translator, as there always have been and will be two types of translators and two manners of translating. The divergence is one that involves a conflict, it is not easy to say whether of taste or point of view. To exemplify: Dr. B. Stevenson Stanoyevitch, in a preface to *An Anthology of Jugoslav Poetry*, edited by him, wrote in criticism of Sir John Bowring, the translator of a number of poems incorporated in that anthology :

“Sir John Bowring, who unveiled to his countrymen the rich treasures of Slavic popular songs in general, is also distinguished by being the pioneer to point out the Serbian in particular. But the claims we at the present day feel ourselves entitled to make on a translator are very different from those current in Bowring’s time. Correctness and fidelity are now considered necessary requisites in a good translation just as an antiquarian exactness is expected in the publication of an old manuscript.”

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This view appears to have been shared by Mr. Eldridge Colby who, reviewing the translation, by D. H. Low, of another Serbian classic, *The Ballads of Marko Kraljevitch*, expressed himself in this spirited fashion :

"It has been said that since Serbian verse cannot be transposed into any metrical equivalent, the best solution is to adopt a form that will be agreeable to English readers. This was the policy adopted by George P. Noyes and Leonard Bacon in their versions of Serb heroic ballads published in 1913. This is the policy followed by popularizers. But as a policy it is an error... Mr. Low is therefore to be commended for his program as strongly as for the admirable way in which he has carried it out... Writing in prose, he is not forced to circumlocution to fill out his lines nor to actual exaggerations or distortions which appeared in some previous renderings. He calls the gigantic piebald horse of Marko by his proper name, the name by which he is known in the Balkan Peninsula, 'Sharatz'. and not by any such silly substitute as 'Dapple'. But enough of argument... The reader may take his choice. But the reviewer prefers the Serb in his native home and costume, rather than as a semi-Americanized immigrant. He prefers to make the acquaintance of Marko Kraljevitch as he is, and not as some may imagine he might appear for the entertainment of Anglo-American readers." (1)

The witticism is refreshing, but if the reviewer

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(1) If I single out these two criticisms, it is not with the intent to accept or dissent from them as far as they relate particularly to the two books which had occasioned them. They are, indeed, no more than typical examples of doctrinaire, narrow and rigid opinion,—and not at all uncommon. The reason for my preoccupation with them is not so much their importance as the rare and extreme resoluteness with which they have been advanced.

means what he says, if he really "prefers to make the acquaintance of Marko Kraljevitch as he is," he is asking for the mundanely impossible. At best the doughty Marko would, in all likelihood, render a transatlantic impresarioship of either Mr. Low or Messrs. Noyes and Bacon rather uncomfortable (2).

Against this rigid dictum should be set the passage from Joachim du Bellay's *La Defense Et Illustration de la Langue Françoise* (which can be found translated in Walter Pater's *Renaissance* in his essay on Du Bellay):

"...chacune Langue a je ne sçay quoy propre seulement à elle, dont si vous efforcez exprimer le Naif en un autre Langue observant la Loy de traduyre, qui est n'espacier point hors des Limites de l'Auteur, vostre Diction sera contrainte, froide, est de mauvaise grace."

The reviewer of the translation of the Marko Ballads carries Dr. Stanoyevitch's requisites of "correctness and fidelity" to a degree that endangers the intelligibility, if not the very *raison d'être*, of translations to all but specialists.

The genial Charles Lamb well understood the problem when he wrote in his *Popular Fallacies*:

"A custom is as difficult to explain to a foreigner

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(2) Perhaps it was to such as profess views similar to Mr. Colby's that Gilbert Watts, the first translator of Bacon's *Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*, addressed himself when he wrote: "But if any be so solemn, so severe, and of such primitive taste they can away with no waters, which come not from the spring-head: nor endure to drink of the Tiber, that passes through Thames; they may give over here, if they so please, and proceed no farther. This interpretation was not meant for such fastidious palates, and yet, it may be, for as distinguishing as theirs are."

Does not this quotation, incidentally, dispose effectively of Dr. Stanoyevitch's remark by which he seeks to distinguish between the older and present-day "requisites in a good translation?" These opposing views are very old, indeed, and modern scholarship as exemplified by Messrs. Stanoyevitch and Colby is discovered limping behind,—in this instance, at least.

## THIS QUARTER

as a pun... The Virgilian harmony is not translatable but by substituting harmonious sounds in another language for it. To latinize a pun we must seek a pun in Latin that will answer to it."

One would be hard put to it to find a better illustration of the futility of the reviewer's theory than the difficulties with which the translators of the Bible have to contend to make the Gospels intelligible to various peoples. An interesting article which appeared in the *New York Tribune* (April 8, 1923), narrates how in translating the Bible into Eskimo it had been impossible to convey the meaning of the word "lamb" to the natives, who have never seen such an animal. So the Eskimo Bible gave "baby seal" as an equivalent where the English Bible uses "lamb", that being the best the translator could do for the natives' understanding.

Whatever the conception of "duty" and "fidelity" owing by the translator, the fact should not be overlooked that they are twofold: towards the original author *as well as* to his reader in the other language. As between the two, I should say that the reader is entitled to precedence, and this for the very simple reason that if the translator fails in "putting across" the story to the reader, he fails as an interpreter, and his "duty" and "fidelity" to the original author *eo ipso* go by the board. And conversely, if he succeed, be it in a more or less talented, artistic or, let us say, inspired manner, with reasonable adequacy, and due allowance being made for inherent linguistic and other incongruities, to make it accessible and assimilable to the reader, to make it "*mundrecht*"—to use a pat German expression,—in matter as well as in spirit, his duty is fully discharged. But in no event may you pay the debt of an eagle by delivering a hare. I must

emphatically decline to accept a few lines of prose when you owe me a ballad, which the author has irrefragably earmarked and bequeathed to posterity. The substitution would be a bad tender in law as in art. Attempting it, you break faith with both author and reader. But so long as you supply the ballad, damaged though it may become in transit, your obligation is wiped out.

Translations, there is no denying, are always dangerous treading, always a pretty confusing piece of business at best. And confusion is aggravated by insistence that translations of poetic compositions be of an exactness required in the "publication of an old manuscript,"—by which the translator's art would be wrapped in the shoddy cloak of mere transcription. Is poetry, that most elusive jack-o'-lantern of literary art, a sort of Magna Charta, a technical conveyance of an ancient copyhold, a Treaty of Versailles or of international debt funding, that it should require such undeviating exactitude?

The opposite view and type are illustrated and differentiated by Walter Pater in the following remark which is taken from a footnote to *Two Early French Stories* in his studies of the Renaissance already referred to:

"Recently *Aucassin and Nicolette* has been edited and translated into English, with much graceful scholarship, by Mr. F. W. Bourdillon. Still more recently we have had a translation—a poet's translation—from the ingenious and versatile pen of Mr. Lang." (3)

"A poet's translation",—this is the other type.

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(3) "Andrew Lang was born in order that he might translate it perfectly, and he has fulfilled his destiny bringing into his English all the gay, sunlit charm of the original." Ezra Pound, —*The Spirit of Romance*.

## THIS QUARTER

To postulate an exact verbal rendering into a foreign tongue of poetic expression of thought and emotion, is of a piece with asking one for the small matter of going out to gather in the rainbow or to pluck the stars from heaven,—“*Merely an earth to cleave, a sea to part.*” Only those who have searched the crevices of their brain to reconstruct coherently what in imagination they visualized incoherently; only those who with battering heart have hammered out their emotions, running in full cry at the heels of vision, into verse or prose, upon the anvil of their mother tongue, can appreciate the utter intemperance of such a stipulation... Virgil could compose but a few verses in a day. Cicero, at the apogee of his career, cudgelled his brain for days in the seemingly trivial matter whether he should write *ad Piraea* or *in Piraeum*. Yeats laments in *Adam's Curse*:

“...A line will take us an hour maybe;  
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,  
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.  
Better go down upon your marrow bones  
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones  
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;  
For to articulate sweet sounds together  
Is to work harder than all these, and yet  
Be thought an idler by the noisy set  
Of Bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen  
The martyrs call the world.”

Then the core of it all,—the music, of which Poe says that “it is of so vast a moment in poetry as never to be wisely rejected—is so vitally important an adjunct, that he is simply silly who declines its assistance.” (4)

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(4) “Dem Liede oder der Ballade, deren Sprache sich dem Kinetischen sehr annaehert, ist das Potentielle durch die in



EDWARD W. TITUS

And Verlaine's immortal stanzas,—we all know them, and they cannot be read too often:

“De la musique avant toute chose,

.....

De la musique encore et toujours!”

“Exact verbal rendering,”—indeed! The American immigration quota for Greeks is full, so the gates at Ellis Island are shut to Apollo. In England he might be suspected of being a Greek waiter in disguise, and the Labor Ministry would turn him back. Who else but he would be equal to the task?

A conscientious translator, if not pedantically minded, feels the throes of word-birth more acutely than does the original author. This may be accounted for by the fact that while the poet to be translated writes from a mood that descends upon him naturally, the translator, if he is not to produce merely a heap of words, if he is to achieve any degree of authenticity, may have to suffer and come through the travails of Sisyphus before he can scratch through the armor of another's personality,—an armor which yet sheathes the other with nothing more impenetrable than “stuff that dreams are made of.”— Strange as are to him the native heavens beneath which walked the poet, strange the constellations that attended his slumbers, strange the flowers that scented his paths, strange the poet's very deities and the gifts which they bestow and the vengeance they wreak,—strange as are all the tokens that mark another race, ethnically, mentally, emotionally and linguistically,—yet the translator must so labor that they,—

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Rhythmus und Reim mitschwingende Musik gegeben. Ohne diese Musik, etwa in Prosasatze aufgelöst, waere die grobe Kynesis von “Ueber allen Gipfeln” eine Banalitaet, als welche das Lied oft jenen erscheint, die es nicht zu hoeren vermeinen.”—Franz Blei, *Das Grosse Bestiarium der Modernen Literatur*.

## THIS QUARTER

“...reclothed in diverse name and fates  
Steal access through senses to our minds.”

Unquestionably, translators frequently and utterly fail in this task, as original writers but too often, indeed, fail in theirs, but if ignominy is to be apportioned, that translator's should be the smaller, whose performance was poor in craftsmanship, and infinitely greater his, who lacked the veriest conception of the business he set about to do.—

What, after all, is the purpose of a translator?

Roughly, it is to make the reader understand in one language what has been said or written in another. Literal or verbal translations (and by this I mean translations in which words are taken in their primary signification, that is without regard to context which may alter or qualify their primary meaning) need not be considered at all, since they do not make sense, or, at best, make but little sense. To be intelligible, translations must, therefore, be more or less free translations. It is precisely the measure in which this freedom is overstepped or restrained in the task of accommodating the foreign work to the reader, that makes or mars a translation. Generally, deviation from the original in the direction of greater freedom is by far not as likely to distort or give a false understanding of a translated work as is the imposition of too much restraint. And in this, translation might be said to resemble photography, where over-exposure may not hurt a negative, but under-exposure renders it useless.

Granted, that in scientific or technical subjects a translation should be textually accurate, which, doubtless, would embrace both the “correctness” and “fidelity” laid down by Dr. Stanoyevitch as a *sine qua non*. It should be competent and

scholarly. But in poetry this scope, I submit, should be broader,—broader by as much as poetry is more (to avail oneself of a Baconian phrase) “in matter loose and licens’d”; broader also by as much as poetry (if we wish to take Coleridge’s view of it) is inherently and properly the antithesis to science. In this, substance is all that matters. In poetry, as one of the arts, textual representation alone, a “crib”, would not, cannot, be sufficient. As in all arts so in the poetic, form *and* manner *and* matter are essential. (5)

Poe’s view of music as an essential element, and Verlaine’s, have been mentioned. Hence it is not the poet’s message alone, his thought utterance alone, that claims our interest, but also his artistry, the manner of his utterance, his style, if you like, and the character of his versification,—the pattern. His verse’s dance, its chirp, its stately march and flow, even its harshness, if he affect harshness:—if we are to feast as Lucullus feasted, we must sample of all these dishes. Were thought to be all that matters in a ballad, writing in ballad form would be fatuous, indeed. Messieurs the scholastically minded can apparently do very well without it. To them accurate lexicography and instruction mean more than artistic enjoyment. Of what use the peacock’s proud strut and iridescence? His anatomical carcass is all-sufficient!

I have said, at the outset, that this divergence of views held of translations is due to divergence in

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(5) Since that has been written I have renewed my acquaintance with Thomas Taylor’s translation of the *Golden Ass of Apuleius* and found that he had brought translation even of prose works under this rule: “In translating Apuleius”—Taylor writes in his preface—“I have endeavored to be as faithful as possible, and to give the manner as well as the matter of the author; since a translation in which both these are not generally united, must necessarily, as I have already observed, be essentially defective.”

## THIS QUARTER

taste. The argument has brought out another feature. It has shown that the problem involves a question of ethics as well as aesthetics, and that because of the element of duty injected into it by the "fundamentalists", behind which, as behind a breastwork, they tenaciously defend their theory of "correctness and fidelity." Of course, that does not render the gulf any easier to bridge over since upon a point of ethics as upon questions of aesthetics, minds, that once have been discordant, can never meet. But these protagonists of fettered translation may, by my showing, perhaps have been brought to recognize, that if the pretended duty of a translator is a twofold one, owing to the author as an author-poet, and to the reader who expects to find poems in a book of poetry, the translator's duty, in any event, is to produce something approaching to what the poet had written and what the reader naturally expects to find, to wit: poems. His task is not to provide a sort of "braille" transcript, upon which, with groping fingers, words may be fumbled for in undeviating sequence and meaning (6).

There is, finally, another duty to be super-added to those, and that is the one which the translator owes to his art, which must not be dragged down to the level of mere bi-lingual parrotry.

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(6) A niche should be reserved in some museum of literary curiosities for a recently published translation into French of selections from *The Making of Americans* by Miss Gertrude Stein, that untiring purveyor of so much amusement to a certain, if rather limited, circle of readers. The translator, Monsieur Georges Hugnet, opens his preface to *Morceaux Choisis de la Fabrication des Américains* with these words:

"Je ne sais pas l'anglais.

*Je ne sais pas l'anglais, mais j'ai traduit lettre par lettre et virgule par virgule."*

This is probably unique as an example of the absurdity to which "exactitude" of translation may lead one ultimately, whether a translator is serious or works with tongue-bulging cheek.

# TRYST ON VINEGAR HILL

by

Robert Penn Warren

*Over Vinegar Hill somehow the sky  
Through the long summer seems to lie  
More intimately, more blue,  
As if from that especial spot it drew  
A deep primeval clarity  
Up from the heart and desperate sinew  
Of niggers who once were buried there.  
Their substances may climb the gradual air,  
Lifting as moisture calmly after rain,  
Up from the burdock leaf and earth-clean bone  
In golden atoms to the sun again  
--The sun which is their own alone.*

*Up Vinegar Hill in summertime  
A nigger boy and girl will climb  
To watch the lazy sun go down,  
The supper smoke rise from Squiggstown,  
The shadow swell like water over earth  
And night hang out a casual first star,  
When the heavy crows have beaten north  
To roost by the river where the deep woods are.*

## THIS QUARTER

*Niggers are the damnedest breed:  
They see such things and do not need  
To know they see, or even guess  
Within the earth that restlessness  
Of thought which arches those obscene  
Fat tropic ocean tides, arches the green  
Slow channels of the secret leaf; which drops  
The nerves' grey filaments to stay the bone,  
And whose dishonest artifice unlocks  
The oak's tough bole to bud, and subtly props  
The crystalline interiors of the stone.  
They do not guess that thought which mocks  
Itself back to its hungry elements.  
They only see, and their ripe innocence  
Of laughter from dark lips in twilight now  
Spills; no wind, but the low dogwood's intense  
White bloom spills on the dew-black bough.*

*So all night long the girl and boy  
Lie side by side on Vinegar Hill  
—Yaller gal and big black boy—  
And time swings up and westward and away.  
Just once they hear the tardy whip-poor-will  
To whose uneasy questioning refrain  
They have no ready answer but to lay  
The lip to lip and heart to heart again.*

*Around them in the summer dark  
Timorously huddle then the dead  
To humbly watch the lovers and to spread  
Their fingers to the little spark  
Of warmth the living bodies own.  
They know their place—not anxious, not too bold—  
Poor ghosts, who once loved laughter and the sun,  
And now, when the lazy day is gone,  
Still find the ivied earth so cold.*



# MORTAL STAKE

by

William Gerhardi

Rather than return at once to Toulon he thought he would run down to Antibes on the chance of seeing Yvette. The sun illumined the landscape and lured him ahead. The train, bound for the fashionable Riviera coast, bore him to these gay and elegant felicities, and everything he could not deal with easily and adequately was left behind. And thank God! Presently the sea coast on his right and the landscape on his left darkened; the lights were turned on, the curtains drawn, but the train still traced that famous coast line along which you travel as you might from Edinburgh to London for a succession of dreary hours, though still by the edge of the sea. And in this train designed for pleasure-seeking passengers en route for Nice and Cannes there also travelled local business men to whom the gold-hued coast was the too-familiar scene of daily toil and who dreamed of other places for their holidays; and a wind had lashed the sea into rebellion and dashed the rain against the closed and curtained windows, and the train was late and the local passengers pulled out their watches and frowned at the thought that their

## THIS QUARTER

families were holding up their suppers for them. And his heart gave a sag at the thought that tonight there was no hearth to welcome him, that on arrival at Juan-les-Pins he would have, in the slush and the dark, to set out by cab, or on foot, to find Yvette's mother's *pension*, that Yvette may long have left for Paris and this travelling which made him yawn might hold nothing better as the end of it than a solitary night in a strange bed. This trip to Juan-les-Pins was likely to be productive of as little as his excursion to Fréjus to interview the horse-dealer. The journeys hither and thither were conceived, he realised, to pacify himself on this or that point: that he could not be swindled with impunity in a horse-deal; and that he would not face the reproaches of the future for having wilfully ignored the opportunity of possessing a lovely girl who promised so much ecstasy and lived but three hours from Toulon. He was tortured thus by what were mere ideas, dragged against his inclination, against his better sense, hither and thither, made miserable now by the thought of being made miserable afterwards in default. And it was all the work of his brain, his subversive, mischievous brain. These journeys, these plans of his brain, had never come to fruition, never attained their own ends, but they had, in forcing him to step out into the world, carried in their trail a host of impressions, a whirl of sensations which fed him and proved to be his real life. And thus no doubt it would be now.

After St. Raphael he began to read the names of the stations—Boulouris-sur-Mer, Agay, Le Trayas, Theoule, Mandelieu-la-Napoule, Cannes-la-Bocca, Cannes, Golfe-Juan, Vallauris, Juan-les-Pins. Driving along the beach to the *pension*, he thought

## WILLIAM GERHARDI

of Yvette's body that had been wet in the sea and dried in the sun and the sand all summer, and thirsted for it on this wet and thirsty night. It was a chill autumn evening and the sea, like some huge black tiger, sprang and raged at the coast, tearing at it with its white claws. The rain had stopped, but the clouds hung heavy and ominous.

And as often happens when you have embraced disappointment, and fate agreeably surprises you out of sheer love of contrariness, sure enough there was Yvette, pleased and charming, and there was a seat for him at her side at the joint table with the fat priest and the Swiss lodgers and Yvette's mother trying her best to keep up a general conversation. After dinner they went to the Casino and thence to Antibes, and afterwards drove back in an open victoria. The sea reared, the wind beat in their faces, the sky drizzled, but Yvette did not want to go home, having told him of a recent episode with a German lodger ejected in ignominy by her mother who had surprised them together and thought his crime the blacker because she was a patriot and he a German; who in expiation of his crime of deflowering a budding rose foolishly had sent her a bouquet of gardenias. No, she would not risk going home. And so they walked and walked on the beach, up the road, through the pine-woods, and the wind from the sea drove the wet air against their faces, and the trees whispered secretively and they felt cool silver rain-drops splash on them in the dark as they brushed beneath the branches.

And beyond the wood up on the hill loomed the graveyard. The sea roared unremittingly. Under the rainy moon stretched the blanched stones of the graveyard. Underneath, worldlings who had read the last page of the story slept unheeding the onrush

## THIS QUARTER

of ages. And these had been men and women whose limbs had thirsted for the tortuous embrace, who had loved passionately, and were no more. And so he, too, would be no more, and in this soaking ground under the rainy moon he would be bid to lie thirsty. Go to bed thirsty? Yes, if he may drink in the morning. "No need, there is no morning, for you will sleep and never wake." What! Tricked out of the fruits of life, told to lie still in death, a nuisance to nobody. He felt rebellious. He would protest, cry aloud that... that he would not agree to do that... Agree? Where was the reasonable power he could reason with?

"Come," he said, "it is drier there on the sloping stones."

They walked up, Yvette leaning her lovely weight against him. "Here?" she asked.

"Why not? Where else?"

"Very well, then."

And as he saw the tombstones bleached by the rainy moon he thought not of it as a desecration of the pious bones that lay beneath, whose spirit had long reached an understanding by which it would be strange not to forgive an erring brother still doomed to walk the earth; but if, as seemed more likely, this was the end of us and to-morrow, obedient, we shall step into our graves, then it was right, then it was proper that on this stone and in the hearing of the dead he plucked delight from the breathing loins of a girl whom fate had thrown in his path, so that the world may live when he was dead, and with whom he was to take from time a little more than time will yield, before this body, too, is bones under a stone beneath the bleaching moon.

# LA MARCHÉ DES MACHINES

(Suggested by Deslav's Film)

by

A. S. J. Tessimond

*This piston's infinite recurrence is  
night morning night and morning night and  
death and birth and death and birth and this  
crank climbs (blind Sisyphus) and see*

*steel teeth greet  
bow deliberate  
delicately lace  
in lethal kiss*

*God's teeth bite whitely tight*

*slowly the gigantic oh slowly the steel spine  
[dislocates*

*wheels grazing (accurately missing) waltz*

*two cranes do a hundred-ton tango against the sky.*

# CHAPLIN

by

A. S. J. Tessimond

*The sun, a heavy spider, spins in the thirsty sky.  
The wind hides under cactus leaves, in empty door-  
[ways. Only the wry  
small shadow accompanies Hamlet-Petrouchka-  
[Chaplin across the plain,  
the wry small sniggering shadow preceding, then  
[in train.*

*The cavalcade has passed towards impossible  
[horizons again;  
but still the mask—the quick-flick fanfare of the  
[cane remains.*

*The diminuendo of footsteps even is done,  
but there remain (Don Quixote) hat, cane, smile  
[and sun.*

*Goliaths fall before the sling, but craftier ones than  
[these  
are ambushed—malice of sliding mats, revolving  
[doors, strings in the dark and falling trees.*

*God kicks us in the pants and sets bananaskins on  
[stairs;  
and tall sombreroed centaurs win the tulip lips and  
[aureoled hair,  
while we, craned from the gallery, throw our card-  
[board flowers  
and our feet jerk to tunes not played for ours.*



## THE FLYING COLUMN

**PUBLISHERS**      *The Publisher and Bookseller*, "the  
AS                      official organ of the Book Trade of the  
**ADVERTISERS**      United Kingdom," had the following  
paragraph under *Notes and News* of a  
recent issue: "Ernest Hemingway, whose *A Farewell to Arms* (Cape, 7s. 6d.), has received almost universal praise at the hands of the critics, is an American resident in Paris, where he acts as European correspondent to an American paper."

What has happened to the publicity genius who presides over the destinies of Jonathan Cape Ltd.?

Here is a writer—we mean Ernest Hemingway—who is America's looming literary idol; America's already ninety per cent realized literary hope; author of *The Sun Also Rises* (anglicè *Fiesta*), which has been the most talked about book throughout the length and breadth of America since 1776, which, lest we forget, is the year of the declaration of American independence; author of *Men Without Women*, *The Torrents of Spring*, *In Our Time*, *Three Stories and Ten Poems*; Hemingway, the beau ideal of every aspiring novelist, an all but legendary hero, a wit, an authority on bull fighting, a great performer on skis, a mighty hunter and fisherman; Hemingway, whose *A Farewell to Arms* Mr. J. B. Priestley "implores every member of the Book Society (British), who has a good head and a stout heart, to acquire,"—which in England means to acquire by loan from a circulating library rather than to acquire by purchase; Mr. Priestley, who in his capacity as one of the Book Society Committee revealed, that *A Farewell to Arms* was one of the best novels that have passed through the hands of the Book Society Committee, and hinted circumspectly—how could he otherwise?—that it might have been the Book Society's choice, had there been no risk of shocking "Aunt Susan"; and yet the Official Organ of the Book Trade of the United Kingdom keeps all these memorabilia concerning Heming-

## THIS QUARTER

way scrupulously from those whose organ it is. It does, however, shoulder the crushing responsibility of informing them that Mr. Hemingway is "an American resident in Paris, where he acts as European correspondent to an American paper", the first part of which note and news is only partly true, the second not at all. On the other hand we wonder whether the "Aunt Susan Knitting Circle" will be beholden to Mr. Priestley for giving away the fact that it parades under the high-sounding name of The Book Society.

As for the genial Ernest Hemingway, let him be of good cheer, for in the Book Trade of the United Kingdom, "she comes unlook'd for, if she comes at all,"—fame, that is. A certain other poet and novelist by the name of Wolfgang von Goethe had to wait to the ripe age of sixty-odd, before, on the occasion of the appearance in London, 1811, of the first translation of the *Sorrows of Werther*, the translator permitted the news to trickle through that Mr. Goethe was "doctor of civil laws, and author of some dramatic pieces which are much esteemed."

They are quick on the literary trigger, over there.

(T.)



HEINE  
THE  
AMBIGUOUS

For muddle-headedness Mr. Mario Praz's critical observations, in the January issue of *The London Mercury*, on Prof. Atkin's *Heine*, published recently by Rutledge, would be difficult to match. He sits on the fence. He does not in so many words venture to deny that Heine was a poet. With ill-simulated reluctance he even pretends to discover that the great poet, who could have conveyed the tragedy of Heine's ambiguous position of a Hebrew in Germany and a German in France, a Jew among Christians, "may be dimly guessed every now and then in Heine's actual works." But the fullest measure of tribute to Heine, if tribute it be, he can bring himself to allocate finally is this: "A charming singer he was, and a very popular one; but also Béranger could be a very charming singer at times. With him (he probably means Heine, but may he not mean Béranger?), no less than with Byron, singing was just another form of venting his energy."—Since when, pray, and by what rule of three,

## THE FLYING COLUMN

must such and no other mode of conveying an ambiguous personality serve as a standard of evaluating the qualities of a poet? And, anyhow, what is there particularly ambiguous in being a Hebrew in Germany or in England or a Jew among Christians in either? Or a Mario Praz in England, for the matter of that?

Mr. Praz ends up by aligning himself with "Treitschke's judgment, biased as it is". We should say that Treitschke's judgment on Heine *was* biased, and Praz proves his muddle-headed bias by adopting Treitschke's, with a difference. Treitschke's did not, *au fond*, permit his political or racial bias to blind him to Heine's quality as a poet, as a great poet, even, despite the unevenness he charged him with. Calling Treitschke into case Mr. Praz commits the risky imprudence of producing a witness whose disclosures may prove damaging to his case. Rogue, licentious, untruthful, etc. are some epithets with which Treitschke bespatters Heine, but he also accords to him the attribute of brilliancy, "of refined artistic sensibilities." Despite his venomous outbursts he dwells on "the poet still retaining the mastery of the ancient language." Treitschke's German soul was greater than his German prejudices and he paid Heine the greatest homage that can be paid a poet when he extolled him as a "compeller of beauty." Panoplied as he was in all his violent intolerance, how far was Treitschke from truth when he spoke of Heine in such a fashion? How far was his admiration from connoting greatness in the poet?

In his *History of Germany*, Treitschke alludes to the well known incident of Heine's visit to the Louvre before he finally took to his bed, from which he was never again to rise. "There"—he writes—"before the image of the goddess (Venus of Milo), who brought him so much sweetness and so much sorrow, he burst into tears,—an overwhelming spectacle for everyone with human comprehension of human error and human fame."

Mr. Praz's comprehension does not seem to belong to the same higher category as Treitschke's, who despite his nationalistic obsessions could still see and love beauty and be thrilled by the accents of great poetry.

(T.)





*Drawing, by Salcia Bahnc.*





# THE WAY HE WENT

by

Norah Hoult

If you had a husband and hated him—hated him so much that it made you feel as if you could burst with hatred—it was damnable, more than damnable, to be able to do nothing about it. Mrs. Sydney Moss clenched her hands and set her mouth as she stared into the kitchen fire.

The room in which she was sitting was beautifully clean and snug. On the mantelpiece two large brass candlesticks glittered on either side of a heavy brown clock with an open candid face. This clock bore an inscription. It had been given to Miss May Weaver on the occasion of her marriage to Mr. Sydney Moss by her fellow members of Harcourt Street Methodist Chapel choir as a token of esteem.

The cheerful red polished linoleum on the floor represented one of those floors on which folk comment illuminatingly, if not originally, that you could eat off it. And in front of the kitchen fire, folded away during the dust and heat of the day, but laid out to grace the hours for leisure or company,

## THIS QUARTER

was a patchwork rug, a good rug, made in her time by Mrs. Moss's mother, Mrs. Henry Weaver. Even the dull and uninteresting cheap green tablecloth gathered to itself a delusive richness under the warm and gentle glow of the white-shaded lamp.

But though Mrs. Moss cared for cleanliness, cared for order and decency and comfort in her surroundings with that urgency which is only to be found in deep and lasting loves, tonight the pleasantness of her room had no power to ease her spirit. It was seven o'clock Monday evening, and her husband had not come in from work at his usual time, which was half past five.

She had not seen him since Saturday mid-day dinner time. Then there had been a row. A proper row! He had only given her a pound out of his wages retaining two for himself. Well, that was more than any woman could have stood. For some time past he had been keeping back more than the pound which had been his agreed share for his own personal use, and even so he had bullied and hung round a day or two before next pay-day trying to get her to lend him some back—*lend*, that's what he called it! Though she never saw it again. But then to go and give her only one pound with which to pay the rent, to buy food, coals, light.... she had told him what she had thought. And he had got mad and shouted at her. Then she had threatened him with a saucepan full of hot water: "If you don't get out of my sight, I'll throw this over you", she had said. And meant it, too. He had been scared; slunk away out of the house muttering words, muttering about paying her out. She had been too much in a rage to listen to him.

And he had stopped away the week-end.

## NORAH HOULT

Another woman, of course. She had known that there had been another woman for some time. Well, that didn't matter. Anybody could have him who wanted cheap goods so far as she was concerned. What did matter was that he was spending the money on his fancy piece which should go to getting really warm clothes for the child, and running the house as in decency it ought to be run.

Great hulking brute! He poisoned her life so that she held herself tense when she heard his step, and when she had to speak to him, her voice changed so that she did not recognise it for her own voice any longer. She didn't love little Caroline so much as she should because of the way he interfered, spoiling and kissing her so that it made her unmanageable. Funny the way she had never taken to the child as she had expected to. If she had only come by some other men. Anybody but that rotten scum!

"Final Star! Horrible murder on Preston Moor. Final."

The newspaper boy's voice broke in on the silence which flowed round her. Preston Moor! Why that was only a matter of ten mile away! She'd treat herself to an penn'orth, so as to take her mind off things.

She opened the hall door on a grey November evening. Only the light of the small general dealer and sweet-shop across the road twinkled merrily through the gloom of the narrow street, chiefly occupied by workmen's houses and stray shops, in which Mrs. Moss lived. The boy had passed the door, slouching carelessly along, and seeming more occupied in exercising his voice than in observing results.

## THIS QUARTER

"Hey there," she called and had to call again, "Hey you, paper!" before he turned.

A penny changed hands. Mrs. Moss returned to her seat in front of the fire.

It was certainly a big affair! One of those murders that would get itself talked about up and down the whole of England, in London itself. Mrs. Moss thrilled a little with local pride as she read how only a few miles from where she sat in her own kitchen Miss Joan Merilees of Park House, Darwin Chase, had been done to death by strangulation — perpetrated by an unknown assailant. The body was said to have lain in the long grass, a hundred yards off the main pathway about twelve hours before it had been discovered that morning by a van driver, James Whitefield, who had informed the police. Identification had been made by the girl's parents who had already notified of the disappearance of their daughter. They did not know she had any men friends... she was a quiet girl, but very popular.

Mrs. Moss read the whole story eagerly. It was as if some anger, some restless appetite within her, was slaked by this news of a crime for which the world exacted full measure, pressed down and running over, of ultimate vengeance. It was when she was glancing down the columns a second time that she heard a hammering at the door.

It would be *him*! No one else knocked with such maddening and persistent volume of sound. Give him time to cool before she went.

Leisurely she laid down the paper. But her face which had during her reading taken on an eager, almost childlike, look had changed. Now it was grim, hard; she looked a woman of whom it would be well to take heed.

## NORAH HOULT

The knocking which had ceased began again. He'd get the attention of the neighbours if he went on like that.

She went softly along the little passage, and opened the door suddenly. For a discomfited moment he stood in front of her, a big man with roughly hewn features and an abundance of dark hair; then he brushed past her into the kitchen. She followed him scenting something unusual in his aspect.

His back was towards her; he was lifting the kettle off the range, and putting it on the fire. She stood observing him a moment with steady hatred. Strange, she might have thought, if her feelings had found conscious expression, that with the entrance of another human being, the room which had been a warm and tranquil haven to her in spite of her disregard, had been transformed into nothing but a place containing the man who to her represented all the evil and ugliness in the whole wide world.

But she did not give herself time for thinking. Her eye had noticed a rent in the sleeve of his coat. It had been torn down from the shoulder seam. Now he turned, slightly revealing that the back of his neck just above and below his collar was covered with scratches..... and then she saw that each side of his face above the jaw bone had been disfigured in the same manner.

"What have you been doing to yourself?" she asked him contemptuously—"Fighting or what? Been on the booze, I suppose. And never gone to work to-day. Taken a day's holiday, I suppose."

He turned: "Hold your bloody jaw," he retorted. But his voice was quieter than she had expected.

As if tired out, he let himself into the chair, and

## THIS QUARTER

held out his hands to the fire. Observing him carefully she saw that there were stains of some description down the front of his coat; that his collar had been crumpled out of any acquaintance with respectability..... a nice mess he'd got himself in, and no mistake.

She stood staring, queer thoughts beginning to hover, though not yet taking shape, at the back of her brain. Conscious of her scrutiny, he turned sharply:—

“What the bloody hell are you standing there gaping at?” He made a face mimicking her expression. “Get a move on, blast you. I suppose you thought you'd got rid of me for good. Well, you haven't. Get me some supper. D'ye hear what I say?”

A sharp answer was on her tongue; but somewhat to her own surprise she checked it, and moved silently towards the pantry. She laid two rashers of bacon in the frying pan, and brought them to the fire, just as, the kettle in his hand, he went into the scullery to wash. Then she covered part of the table with newspaper: wouldn't give him the chance of messing her clean cloth, and on it laid cup and saucer, knife and fork, loaf of bread, saucer of margarine and sugar basin. Then she returned to her frying pan, and dished up the bacon as he re-entered.

Now he was in his shirt sleeves with his collar removed. Observing him out of the corner of her eyes she saw that this, too, was dirty and crumpled. And it had been a clean one Saturday. One thing about him was always to take a pride in his appearance..... nothing but his beastly conceit, of course, priding himself on being a man that all the women ran after... but there it was. Even when,



as occasionally happened, he got drunk Saturday night, he'd never come home in this state. And all those scratches!

Her gaze went to his boots, and saw how thickly they'd been embedded in dirt. Country mud that was, or she didn't know her own name. A queer sort of satisfaction was taking possession of her.

"Haven't you an egg, eh? By gum this isn't much of a supper to set before a hungry man. Haven't you an egg or summat?"

Now he was speaking more like himself. The hot tea which he had gulped down had brought some colour to his cheeks which had been much whiter than was usual with him.

"There are no eggs. How can there be out of a quid which has to last the whole week", replied Mrs. Moss. She sat down in a chair from which she could observe his movements, and picked up the newspaper again. But before reading she suddenly shot a sharp query at him. "Where did you sleep last night?"

"What's that to you? Weren't hankering after me yourself, was you?" Sydney Moss laughed, but his wife, saying no more, thought that there was an uneasiness about him. She started to read, but she found she could not make sense of the words: a feeling of mingled delight and apprehension had taken possession of her, the while she felt something warning her. "Be careful; be careful now!"

"Where's the kid?" he asked after a pause.

"Over at her aunt's. The others wanted her to stay and sleep."

He grunted, and went on eating. She knew he didn't like Caroline being at her sister's; and she had pleasure in the thought of his dissatisfaction. Still there were other fish to fry.

## THIS QUARTER

"Been to work to-day?" She asked him this time in a casual tone.

"No business of yours." Of course he hadn't been to work in the state he'd got himself. She rustled the paper, and felt one of her hands pressing hard on the other. Careful, careful! "Seen the *Star* this evening?" she asked him after a few moments.

He shook his head. Then his hand reached out towards her. "And it 'ere."

She passed it to him immediately, and sat back watching his face. First of all he left it down carelessly while he scraped a bit of bread round the grease left on the plate. When the last morsel was in his mouth he took up the paper, and his face grew more intent as he saw the flaring head-line. But he did not start. Instead he cut himself another slice of bread and plastered it with butter before he began to read.

She watched him so intently that he was called back. "What's up? Staring at me like as if you never seen me before!" He stopped a moment. "Only wish to Christ, I'd never seen *you* before."

"I was looking at those scratches on the back of your neck," replied his wife with composure. "Looks as if some one hasn't been too pleased with you."

His face darkened; he dropped the paper and stood up glaring at her. For a moment she thought he was going to strike her. Then it seemed as if he checked himself, making an effort at composure. "You... you make me tired," he said, but she knew that far stronger words had been on his lips. He sat back and abruptly picked up the paper.

A spark of the expectancy within her was transmuted into joy. If that wasn't a complete give-away, she'd like to know what was. Of course,

he was trying to carry it off, pretend nothing had happened. He'd had plenty of time to think out what he'd do, and what he was doing was to pretend that nothing had happened. He thought her too disdainful of him to ask questions. He thought she wouldn't put two and two together. He thought home was the safest place for him after all. She busied herself clearing the table, her mind working busily. Then as if she had made up her mind she came and sat down again.

"So you're not going to tell me what you've been doing these days, away from home," she said in a voice which appeared almost genial. He glanced up.

"Why should I? You're not interested. You turned me out of the house, Saturday, didn't you?"

She made no answer. It was as if she were turning his words over in her mind. Then she drawled, her eyes never leaving his face.

"Took a walk up Preston Moor way maybe?"

He stared at her blankly. Oh, apparently he'd been ready for her then. "Preston Moor! What do I want up there? You've got it on your brain it seems."

So. She'd have to go slowly. Mustn't rouse his suspicions. "I thought maybe you'd come across this poor girl who's been done in," she said in a casual voice.

"Ow, you did, did you." He mimicked her accent.

Then he turned his chair to the fire, and in silence started to fill his pipe. An ugly look crossed his face. "I wouldn't say," he said speaking deliberately, "but what she deserved all she got." He stood up and reached for the matches from her side of the mantelpiece. "Most women deserve all

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they get," he added. "And you can take that from me. See?"

Feeling him standing so near, Mrs. Moss received a strong physical impression of the sheer brute masculinity of him; involuntarily she leaned away. Dared to knock *her* down, he had, once, when he had the drink in him. Not but what he was peaceable enough as a rule. Still... if he were roused he had an ugly temper. That's what his mother had always said of him. "Leave him alone, and he's all right," she'd said. "But don't get on the wrong side of him too often." This girl had resisted him: must have been a decent girl. Perhaps hadn't known he was a married man.

He was stooping down, and taking off his boots. The action startled her into apprehension. Tomorrow he'd clean them before he went to work. His shirt wouldn't look very bad.... they'd think it was an ordinary rent. If she didn't look mighty sharp all the evidence would be destroyed. As if in answer to her thoughts she heard him speak.

"S'pose instead of sitting there gaping at nothing you give a brush to my coat." He jerked his head: "It's in scullery."

Mrs. Moss paused a moment. Then in a mild voice she said, "How did you come to get it in such a state?"

Her husband didn't look up, but after a moment she heard him mutter, "Slipped when I was getting on tram."

He was lying. With a thrill of joy Mrs. Moss knew that this time her instinct was sure. She rose, went into the scullery, looked at the coat, and then to gain time began to rinse the cup he had drunk out of.

No time to be lost. No time to be lost. If she

left things till the morning, he'd be up and away with his coat and shoes rubbed clean. No, no time to be lost.

Passing back into the kitchen she observed the time. Turned half past eight. Back again out of his sight she stood still a moment, her lips pressed together, her eyes on the floor.

Yes, that was what she had to do. Go out now, go this very instant; go to the police station in Robert Street, and ask a policeman to come along. She wouldn't say anything definite: wasn't her business to. Just tell them that her husband, Mr. Sydney Moss of ten, Mincing Lane, had been away from home all the week-end, that he'd come back an hour ago covered with dirt and scratches, and refused to give any account of his movements. And that he acted very funny. Well, it was acting funny, wasn't it; for a husband to take a week-end off, not to mention a day's leave from work, and not say what he'd been up to. But it wasn't for her to say what he'd been doing of. She'd just tell the police; it was her duty to inform the police, and then they'd do what they thought. That was right. They'd do as they thought.

She turned a tap on and off again; then she moved the washing-up basin about the sink making a clatter. Under its cover she stood for a second taking a peep at her husband's back. He was sitting back in the chair in an attitude of fatigue. She saw him draw a hand across his forehead—drowsy he was. In a few moments as likely as not he'd pop off.

Boldly she went past him out of the room. "Where are you off to?" he called after her.

"Just got to do something upstairs," she called back, and ran up quickly.

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Putting on her hat and coat she saw in the glass that her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes bright. Steady, she told herself as she pressed back a wisp of hair. Steady! You just go off and do your duty. Steady! Soon be over. Steady!

She went down the stairs quietly, and opened the hall door. A wind met her. She pulled the door to, wondering as she did so if he had called out. Never mind, she was well away now. And he couldn't stop her; he hadn't his boots on. When she got back she'd have police protection.

She went on her way rapidly, seeing nothing that was about her. Only the wind and the keenness of the air fanned her excitement into a sort of exultation. He'd *hang*, he'd *hang*, he'd *hang*—the words kept repeating themselves in her mind till their repetition startled her into a sort of defensive awareness. Well, a chap that interfered with a girl that didn't want him deserved hanging, didn't he?—when he murdered her as well that was to say. Murder! At last Sydney Moss had been a little too clever. *Murder!*

Only when she approached the entrance to the police station, did her pace slacken. Now her face took on a solemn expression. She wished her heart didn't beat so. Never mind; no one would blame her. She was only doing her duty; that was it; she was doing her duty by the relatives of the deceased.

Pulling her coat tighter over her throat, she ascended the steps. A young constable seeing her coming opened the door. Inside the bare room, which seemed dazzlingly bright after the darkness outside, she paused uncertain; then she addressed the young man.

"I've come to give information about the



murder." She spoke in a low quick voice. "Where do I go?"

She saw his face which had been surveying her with a sort of superior amusement change into a startled gravity. "What! the murder up on Moor?" She nodded.

He turned from her, and she watched him go up to a big desk at which another older policeman without a helmet was seated. As if in a dream she saw the two men's faces and the keen look the sergeant gave her. He'd a small dark moustache. Looked funny, he did, without his helmet. He beckoned her, and she advanced.

"You say you know something about the Moor murder?" She nodded. He looked at her sternly, "Now remember this is a serious matter."

"I know it's a serious matter all right. That's why I'm here." Mrs. Moss spoke indignantly. She hadn't come to be bullied.

"Very well then. Sit down." A chair was brought for her. "Name please? And address?"

Mrs. Moss supplied the information, and noticed with a thrill that what she was saying was being taken down slowly and laboriously by the young policeman. "Now then go on."

Mrs. Moss told her story; she told it well. Away from home these two nights; covered with scratches and dirt... not been to work...

The sergeant interrupted her eloquence. "How do you know he's not been to work?"

Sharp they thought themselves, didn't they! "Because he wouldn't go to work in the state he was in; because he hadn't been home to his dinner, because he wasn't back till seven thirty by the clock which always keeps right time, and because he let out he hadn't been to work." Had he said so?

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She couldn't remember. But that was all right. Course he hadn't been to work.

She began to dislike the man behind the desk; he asked so many stupid questions. Now he was asking her another, looking her in the face as if she was a criminal. "Got no grudge against your husband, have you, Missus?"

"Grudge! No, of course not. Why should I? Just doing my duty, aren't I. I read about the murder in the paper, and there you are! I thought to myself, right's right. That's what I said to myself 'right's right.' It's no business of mine if you don't want to do anything. I've been wasting my time long enough." She flounced up from her seat, and turned to the door.

"Hold hard!" said the sergeant. "Just a moment, if you please. You wait over there." Standing by the door she watched the two men consulting. The young constable, having received his orders, advanced. "I'm coming with you, Ma'am," he said and held the door open for her to go through first.

"It's all the same to me." said Mrs. Moss in a tart voice.

They walked on in silence. First of all Mrs. Moss held her head high. Then when people passing stared, she began to feel self-conscious. Looked as though he were taking *her* in charge. Good Heavens! There was Mrs. Sellars; no she wasn't looking; what a mercy! Good thing it was a nasty evening, not many people about.

Well, if anyone did see her, they would only think she was fetching a policeman in to her husband for doing something to her in drink. What matter if they gaped. Let them gape. She had always held herself apart from her neighbours... the respectable Mrs. Millbank at the post

office was the only one she'd much to say to... All the same, she kept a piece in front of the policeman holding her head down, with her coat held close round her. What was going to happen in a few minutes? Would Syd fight?

They came to the house. For a second Mrs. Moss hesitated. Just through one wild moment her heart had failed—it was in her mind to say, "It's only a joke, sorry for your trouble," or "I haven't got a husband." Then her hatred came back; this was her only chance. And she had to do her duty, she had to do her duty! She opened the door, and beckoned the constable. He followed her cautiously, and then paused. "P'raps you'd better let him know, I'm here," he said in a low voice.

A coward like all men! His irresolution was as a spark to Mrs. Moss. "He's just here," she said in a loud almost cheerful voice, and went through to the kitchen.

Sydney Moss had fallen into a dose, but their entrance had awakened him. "What's this?" he said blinking up at his wife. In a muddled way he rose to his feet gathering the impression that company were just arriving.

"You're wanted," said Mrs. Moss to him in a harsh voice. She stood on one side awaiting the policeman who came forward.

"What the 'ell?" said Mr. Moss astonished.

The policeman consulted his note-book. "You Sydney Moss of ten, Mincing Lane?"

"That's right."

The policeman felt uncomfortable; the man in front of him standing in his shirt sleeves looked so genuinely surprised that he became convinced he'd been brought on a fool's errand. To cover his distaste he spoke gruffly. "Information has been

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given that you absented yourself from work to-day, that you've been away from home since noon of Saturday the 18th inst., and that you returned at seven o'clock to-night in suspicious circumstances with your face scratched and your clothing torn, and that you refuse to give your wife here an account of your movements."

"And so she slipped out to tell you all about it!" Mr. Moss slapped his thigh. "Well, that's a good one." He laughed.

His laughter irritated the policeman. Mrs. Moss broke in, "Look at his face, look at his face. Covered with scratches. And they're at the back of his neck, too. Tell him to turn round and show you. A human hand done them, or I don't know anything. Wait a moment"—she was in and out of the scullery in an instant—"Look here. His coat all torn! Here's his collar. Those there are the boots he's just taken off. Look at the mud on them." The constable examined each of the phenomena indicated in leisurely fashion. He began to write in his notebook.

"Look 'ere," cried Sydney Moss getting angry. "Stow all this. What's up? What the 'ell's wrong. Who says I ain't been to work to-day?" He paused to look at his wife, and illumination came. "My eye," he said in a low amazed tone. "She thinks I done that woman in up on Moor. Is that it?"

"Understand," said the policeman. "No charge is being made against you. But it's my duty to ask you to give an account of your movements on the evening of Sunday, the nineteenth inst."

"Be 'anged if I will," cried Sydney Moss. "Leastways," he added, remembering that a policeman was a policeman, "not before her." He jerked his thumb towards his wife.

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"I most ask you to step up with me to the station then," said the policeman. Mr. Moss paused to think. "It will save trouble in the end," he added in a less official tone. The two men looked at each other, and Mrs. Moss was excluded from that look.

Mr. Moss made his decision. "Right you are," he said, and sat down, drawing on his boots. Mrs. Moss watched him discomfited. "You haven't got anything on me, mate," he said almost cheerily to the policeman as he went for his overcoat. He wound a scarf about his neck in place of a collar. "Leastways," he added, "nothing that you can put me in quod for."

"Right you are," said the policeman.

As in a dream Mrs. Moss saw them go. Her husband did not give her a look; even the policeman did not utter a "Good evening."

Better get that bit of ironing done. She wasn't going to stand there staring. All the same... she hadn't thought he'd go so quiet. Never mind. She'd done her duty. Not think about it any more. That was best.

But when she got to bed she tossed and turned. There were so many pictures appearing before her excited brain: at one moment she saw Sydney in the dock with the judge putting on his black cap. And Sydney was looking round, looking for her; at another everyone was pointing at her—the wife who had sent her husband to the gallows; at another she was being acclaimed as a heroine who held what was right dearer to her than her own flesh and blood; at another Sydney came back, he had got them to let him off; and he was thrashing her unmercifully while policemen stood by. Her body trembled and shook.

Again, it was the question of ways and means

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that perplexed her. With Syd gone, how was she to make a living for herself and the child? Would there be a subscription got up? Not for the wife of a murderer. But then she herself it was who had... never mind. Would he get off? Hadn't he done it? It was not until the pale fever-dispelling light of day came that she dropped into a brief and troubled slumber.

.....

She was washing up her breakfast things when he came back. He brushed past her and went without a word into the scullery and turned on the tap. With a courage that had something in it of gallantry she lingered in the kitchen.

But when he had dried his face he went past her again without a word. She heard him go upstairs and move about overhead in the bedroom. Everything stopped within her while she waited. But she made a pretence of going on with her work.

At last he came down and stood in the doorway. She turned towards him but though she heard his voice she could not meet his eyes. Only she saw that he had a bag in his hand.

"I'm going now," he said. "Going to work. And I'm not coming back. Get that in your head. I'm not coming back. Not to-night, nor yet to-morrow night, nor night after. We haven't hit it for a long while now, but I've stuck it"—he jerked his head—"for sake of the kid. I'll see what's to be done about her. I'm her father still. But I'm not living in the same house with you again." He paused. A look that was almost childlike in its puzzled desire to comprehend came in his eyes. "Why! you'd be poisoning me next."

Mrs. Moss tried to speak. The words, "Maybe I



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was a bit hasty" came into her head, but her tongue was stiff. She stood staring past him.

"Some men would give you a hiding. Well, I'm not going to do that. I'm just done with you. D'ye see? I'm just done with you."

Still she couldn't speak.

He turned away, and looked back. "I'll send for the rest of the things I want, and I'll fix things up later. But I gotta go to work now."

He took a few steps away, and then paused, looking for the first time full at that still averted face. "You allus thought yourself too much of a lady for the likes of me, too good for me, you thought yourself, didn't you? Well I reckon I'm a bit too good for you now—that's all."

The door closed. He had gone. Mrs. Moss still stood tense for a few moments as if listening. Then she relaxed, and sat down heavily in a chair, her hand pressed to her heart.

"P'raps he done it after all," she told herself, but the assurance had no conviction.

Her chin sagged on to her chest. She didn't know how she felt—only that she was being emptied; that her long cherished feelings of hate and anger were being taken from her, that she was being sucked dry. Yes, that was how she felt, very tired—and very empty. There didn't seem to be anything that mattered much in the world any more.

# THOUGHT-SHADOWS

by

Pauline Leader

*Thought-shadows,  
you are embryo poems  
for whom there must be more incarnations  
before I can analyze you.  
says the brain,  
the word-hewer;*

*but the imagination says,  
you are already perfect;  
too perfect, too beautiful,  
so that the word-hewer  
must create altogether  
new associations for you  
and fail even then—*

*and that is why your life  
is but an instant that leaves me troubled  
as if a prophecy had brushed me...  
for only the death  
who over-takes you so swiftly and jealously  
is great enough to analyze you.*

# TRUCKS

by

Pauline Leader

*New York is a city of trucks.  
It is empty except for the trucks.  
The streets are made for them.  
Policemen are made for them.  
Almost, one day, I was made for them  
but the policeman caught my hand in time  
and together, the policeman and I,  
held each other's hand tightly  
and together we tingled with triumph--  
we had outwitted a truck.*

# NOTES ON THE WAR NOVEL

by

Richard Aldington

## I

Since it is impossible to be wise before the event, one may as well try to be so afterwards.

I find writers—almost invariably those who have not written War books—asserting that the “boom in War books is already collapsing.”

I don't know. So far as England is concerned, I find the War books easily ahead of all others in sales, while the advance Spring lists of the English publishers are fuller than ever with books of this sort.

Why?

There are many explanations. So far as England is concerned, I think a very simple explanation may be found. The English novel, once the world's boss, (like other things English) has become conventional and unreal. Many are nothing but mild sexual titillations, a feebly decorous erethism. Through a peep-hole the reader watches the process of tumescence in hero and heroine, and leaves them, mildly worked up, outside the bridal chamber.

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Others again are fairy-tales of action, mystery, crime and detective stories, mostly as false as the sugar erotics. One or two novelists attempt style and acquire decorous reputations. One or two, like Lawrence and Joyce, try to tackle modern human life; and are immediately suppressed.

I think people do not realise the significance of this new phase of suppression in England. It is the fear of truth in a race which is losing its grasp on reality.

Only one subject evades this taboo—the War. The War novels would have been suppressed in England, if the suppressors had not been perfectly aware that their action would create immense opposition. The ex-Service men are so smoulderingly enraged by the deceptions practised upon them, that any attempt to suppress a War novel would create a hell of a row.

But the War was a terrific experience. Consequently the "War novel" has let a breath of life into the fetid absurdities of the Humme, Bugge and Co "novelists", who supply England's fiction. I have no doubt whatever that Humme, Bugge and Co, will triumph in the end; but meanwhile we can have our say. If "Death of a Hero", which is a plain, unvarnished and scrupulously accurate picture of English middle-class life, had not been a "War" book, it would immediately have been prosecuted and suppressed. As an amusing illustration of this, I may say that a "respectable" firm of English printers refused to print an absolutely innocuous poem by that wicked writer, and that the said writer is making a collection of the threatening and abusive letters received from his virtuous countrymen and countrywomen...

All this by the way. There seem to me very good

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reasons why the books (I won't say "literature") arising from the events of 1914-18 should continue to occupy public attention. Writers in the past have denounced War academically—no one has ever done it better or more wittily than Voltaire. But for the first time in history a war has been recorded as it happened by those who took an active part in it. And consider the following points.

Apart from diplomatic and journalistic bunk, has anyone a clear idea of why the War was fought, and what issues were settled by it?

July 1914 saw a crisis of international fear of the most abject kind. Everybody was afraid of everybody else, and plunged into War as a refuge from ignominious fear. Each group thought it was defending itself from the aggression of the other group.

"La Patrie est en danger", said the French. "That beleaguered fortress, our Fatherland", said the Germans. "British honour", said the English.

What really has been proved? The utter absurdity of the nationalist idea—largely an English creation. The serious deterioration of civil liberty. The Russian Revolution. The shattering of the prestige of the white races. Immense economic disorders. The shifting of war to the economic plane, with tariffs as the weapon. And further, the disappearance of the British hegemony.

Thus, the War of 1914-18 was not a mere episode, but a gigantically important event which influences everyone's life. To ignore it is simply playing the giddy ostrich.

The War was not a sudden misfortune sprung upon an innocent world. I am convinced that it was the inevitable result of the life which preceded it. The same sort of life still goes on. Inevitably that



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must lead to another similar contest—despite peace conferences, which are mostly blague—and, with modern weapons, that means mutual destruction. Napoo, fini. And that means you as well as me and the Class of 1920.

If these things are thus, it is not surprising that people should take an interest in records of those years.

Finally—this is perhaps specious—it was “our” little war. There won’t be another one like it. The next one will be much worse. Although the young are powerfully bored by the subject, it seems an elementary duty to give warning of what may be expected by them if they do not immediately dispose of any government which meditates a similar display of heroism, in others.

## II

However, perhaps this is too elevated for human nature’s daily food. One may consider more fruitfully, perhaps, *how* those experiences may be organised into works of art.

My own feeling is that the War books are not works of art at all, and that is why they are and will be read. In literature you have the pure work of art (Mallarmé) and the “document” (War diaries, *faits divers*, archives). Both remain the province of specialists. What survives is journalism—i. e. the written word intended for a special and temporary purpose, which continues to interest people either by its universal application or by some special excellence in expression. Nobody writes for posterity if he can interest his own time. Conversely, those who fail to interest their own time generally stand a poor chance with posterity. (There are

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always exceptions.) I think of "Homer", composed by indigent rhapsodists for stewed goat and turpentine-flavoured wine; Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, butchered to make an Athenian holiday; Virgil, flattering Augustus for a farm; Lucretius, explaining the "new" philosophy; the Gospels, penny tracts for social revolutionaries; St. Augustine, masturbating in public; the troubadours, after someone else's wife; the trouvères, after someone else's money; Mr. William Shakespeare, popular dramatist and theatrical impresario; Dean Swift, pamphleteer; Monsieur de Voltaire, pamphleteer; J. J. Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, pamphleteer; Dr. Samuel Johnson, gashag; The Reverend Lawrence Sterne, getting away from the barbarity of a Yorkshire prebendary. "Art" is a 19th century superstition. A bas Flaubert, and his faithless Achates, Ford Madox Ford, *né* Hueffer. The writers for posterity, the "great artists," were Callimachus, Lycophron, Ausonius, Guido Cavalcanti, Andrea Navagero, the "Arcadians," Voiture. Philothée O'Neddy and Mr. Walter Pater...

There was, however, a man called Charles Dickens, who began life by sticking labels on tins of blacking, was promoted to junior reporting, and discovered he had a knack of observing the life of his times.

Twenty-four hours of Dublin in June, 1904, have made James Joyce immortal. So to speak.

Remarque and Markovits have put down something of the life of their time.

## III

The great danger for the "War novelists" is not their literary inexperience, but the influence of the

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professional novelists. I have read "No more Parades." It is poppycock, pure bunk, told with superb virtuosity. A man who can write as brilliantly as that should be put into an Artists' Aquarium. But the matter of the book is false and silly egotism. Contrast it with Herbert Read's "In Retreat," a magnificently sincere work, written before he became involved in Bloomsbury foolery and writing for posterity and one hypothetical intelligent reader. The last page of "In Retreat" is terrific, unforgettable, masterly. I have read it twenty times, and always with respect and admiration. Well, "In Retreat" was written as a sort of report of the March defeat. I shall be immensely surprised if Read, on his present track, ever does anything one half as good. A potentially great writer gone phut, through self-consciousness.

But contemporary English "intelligentsia" are a rotten influence on anyone.

What I am struggling to express is this. The "War writer," if he is sincere, is trying to convey essential experiences, essential human nature as revealed in those experiences, without references to the "artistic" standards of the writers for posterity. Put it he is a mere reporter. But the War "document," the diaries, the note-books, the field-service messages, are only intelligible to those who were in the experience, and can interpret it. Recently, in clearing out old papers, I found a Field Service Message book with duplicates of my messages during a battle. Most of them were merely map references: M 2 a 35 72. M 2 b 20 35. Incomprehensible even to me after ten years. Others were: "Intense gas and H. E. bombardment on Hop and Hokey ack ack ack sending casualties via Hurdle." Or: "Tell those bloody batteries to get

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off Hop M 2 c 35 75--M 2 c 95 15." Or: "Half water ration sent up in uncleared petrol tins ack ack undrinkable ack ack ack please inform immediately if other tins available ack ack ack urgent end of message."

Obviously, this sort of thing is unintelligible unless interpreted. The danger is that the interpretation may be in terms of the professional novelists. The "War writers" should utterly ignore the technique of the professional novelists, and (to parody one of them) "write of the War in terms of the War." If only you can put down a fraction of what really happened, you have got something which knocks the professional novelists endways. Because, what matters is human life and human experience and human nature stripped of footling conventions... There is still an immense future for the "War book."

Another difficulty is this. What everyone remembers is the exceptional; whereas, what is important in literature is the ordinary made vivid and interesting. As Osbert Sitwell points out, the "ordinary" is in fact so amazing that when it is accurately recorded everybody shouts: "Exaggerated, untrue, blatant cynicism, bad temper, send him to Coventry."

Let me give a rather dull example.

After the defeat of the British Army in March, 1918, all sorts of new, imposing Regulations were enforced. Life became quite unlivable to anyone who remembered the go-as-you-please days of '16 and '17. I'm not sure that the unfortunate men didn't have to clean their buttons in the line.

Well, on a relief day, I went up the line ahead of the rest with my servant and a few details. I must have been on Battalion Headquarters at the

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time, and I suppose the Colonel sent me on ahead to look round the positions in daylight and help the Companies to find their way in strange trenches.

I had just come back from a Company Officers Course, where we had been violently impressed with the importance of "Discipline." And, among a million other things, trench sanitation. I should explain that two-thirds of the Division were raw recruits from England, aged about eighteen and singularly windy. The Company officers were nearly off their heads with it. These recruits were always piddling in the trenches—a most heinous military offence. We had been specially warned to treat it severely.

Going up the communication trench, what should I see in a branch trench, but a man in a brand new overcoat urinating. Filled with zeal, I went up to him, followed of course by my dutiful escort, and asked him what the hell he thought he was doing? He turned round, hastily fumbling himself into decency. I was just about to order him into arrest, and to tell my Corporal to take his name, number and regiment, when I saw he was a Battery Sergeant-Major. The artillery only wore their badges on one arm, and that arm had been turned away from me. Of course, I couldn't arrest a Battery Sergeant-Major, who was doubtless the apple of the eye of some Battery Commander, who would blow us to hell if we annoyed him. So I had sort of meekly to get out of the situation with a feeble discourse on trench discipline, sanitation, and setting a good example to the troops. The man had the Military Medal and the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Now, all that is utterly futile. But I remember it

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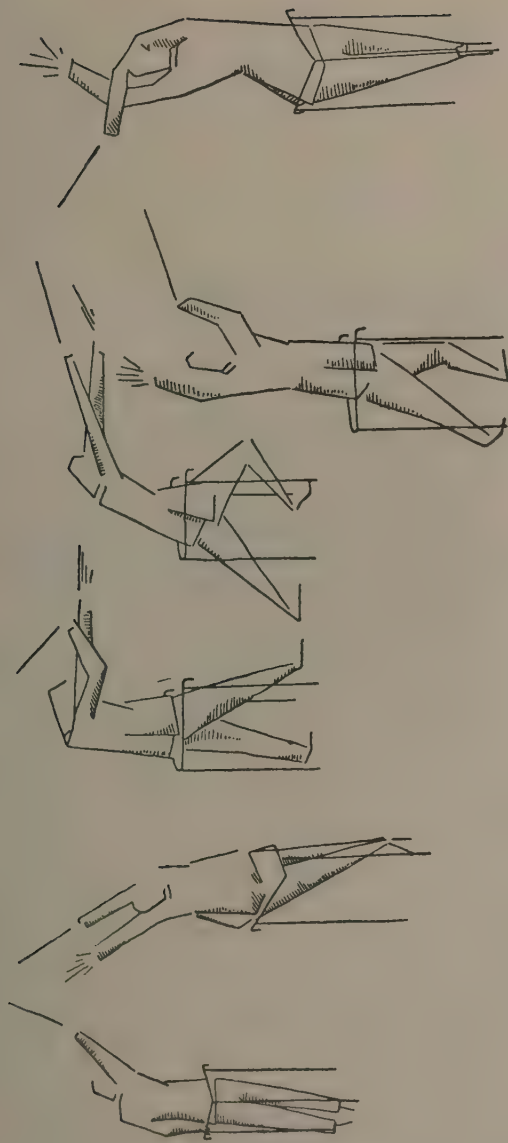
with complete vividness. I could make quite a long story out of it, and its effect on me and the men with me and the Battery Sergeant-Major. But obviously it is quite unimportant compared with the "ordinary" things going on—the aeroplane battle over somewhere else, the corpse being carried down from the sniper's post, the preparations for the relief, the plans for the patrols in No Man's Land that night, the Colonel's attack of constipation which would make him more than usually intolerable at the Front Line inspection next morning... But all those things were "ordinary," and are forgotten. What I remember, with pain even at this moment, is the idiocy of mistaking for a recruit a Battery Sergeant-Major who was unlawfully piddling in a trench.

So there you are.

I suppose the War will die with us. When we have been successful in kicking the bucket, nobody will really care about "The Great War" any more than we care for Austerlitz or the charge of the Fusiliers at Albuera. It will all be a matter of history and history-books. Young men will go to see "Journey's End" and will leave the theatre with a determination to emulate the beautiful young Public Schoolboy. And "*ce que nous avons fait*" will be a bumble of war-bores.

Every boy under twenty whom I talk with is not only utterly ignorant of "our" War, but is eagerly or resignedly prepared to take part in the Next Great Push for civilisation. Over you go, boys, and the best of luck.





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# AT THE THEATRE

by

Tor de Arozarena

If Marcel Achard had suddenly thrown open a window and let a flood of fresh air into the rarely ventilated auditorium of the Comedie-Française he could not have aroused more indignation than his play "*La Belle Marinière*." Subscribers protested shrilly at every performance. They were horrified to discover that this gifted young dramatist had dared to put a barge upon the stage and invite them to cruise for three short acts along the quiet rivers of France. A barge where Andromaque and Alceste were wont to strut! To make matters worse, these bargees conversed, not grossly as becomes the ship-yard, but with that whimsical irony and tenderness that is peculiarly Marcel Achard's own. Realism was never his object. The river is a mere picturesque background for his vagabond fancy in which Barrie and de Musset seem to join hands. Could anything be more disconcerting to honest playgoers?

There are faults in the play. Its comedy is somewhat laborious at the start, and the end lacks firmness. Yet *La Belle Marinière* has singular

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charm. Marinette is a pretty country maid who marries the jovial skipper of the barge. She is jealous of his friendship with Silvestre, the sailor, for the two men are inseparable. As the months pass Marinette's resentment grows until, in a moment of exasperation, she intimates to the astonished skipper that his precious Silvestre is making love to her. The skipper does not believe it, but he hides in the cabin while Marinette sets herself to vamp the sailor. She is deliberately provoking, but his loyalty is such that he does not even understand. Besides he is preoccupied by an accident to the towing horse. The skipper is hugely tickled by Marinette's discomfiture and makes the mistake of laughing at her. She is furious. Her sensuous nature is aroused; her feminine pride is wounded. She begins to hate Silvestre and despise her husband. And suddenly the quarrel that she could not bring about is started by the lame horse. The poor brute must be shot. Both men are heart-broken and the skipper blames the sailor. Bitter words pass between them and they come to blows. Two friends who would not fight for a woman are parted by their pride in their work.

Marinette triumphs. Yet she is unhappy. So is her little sister who loves Silvestre; so is the skipper. They write to the sailor to return. He does. Marinette admits her bad behaviour and makes her peace with him, but her failure to seduce him still rankles in her heart. She has brooded over it until his love is the one thing she craves. And this time she sets herself to win him more subtly, more sincerely. The honest fellow is no match for her. He too has brooded, and he is ready to run away with her. Both are victims of their vanity, but Silvestre is wretched at betraying his

friend. "Do you think I won't be unhappy too?" he exclaims miserably to the skipper.

The acting had just the right realism touched with poetry. Marie Bell was a revelation as Marinette. Her sullen beauty and smouldering eyes expressed every mood of the exasperated young woman with fine understanding and sympathy. Yonnel was excellent as the virile sailor who is helpless in the toils of an amorous woman, and André Brunot was capital as the jolly skipper. The settings—three bright, airy landscapes with the barge moored to the footlights—were entirely in the spirit of the play and of contemporary art. Another blow to conservative playgoers.

Mystery surrounds the authorship of *Les Criminels*, a play which Georges Pitoeff imported from Germany. It is safe to suppose that "Ferdinand Bruckner" is a writer of prominence. The dramatic balance and shrewd satire of his piece does not suggest an apprentice. The action takes place in a boarding house of which we see six rooms and the basement simultaneously. A curtain representing the façade rises disclosing the interior.

"*Le rideau, c'est un mur qui s'envole...*"

In the basement, a young typist and her lover lead a precarious existence. Above, on the ground floor, is a sordid wine-shop and the dining-room and kitchen of the boarding house. Three rooms occupy the upper floor. As the action shifts, the rooms are alternately lighted up or darkened. Occasionally several are seen at once, and we behold a love scene or a murder enacted in one room while next door a man is shaving or a servant goes about some homely, household task, unconscious of what is occurring behind the wall.

The chief interest centres around Ernestine, the

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cook, and Gustav, her lover. He is a café waiter and a gay Lothario. When Ernestine discovers that he is carrying on an intrigue with the proprietress of the wine-shop, she strangles her rival. Gustav is accused of the murder and sentenced to death. Ernestine makes no effort to save him, since only in death can she be sure of his fidelity. With a bottle of poison she then goes up to his old room "to join him."

Around these two gravitate the other criminals of the house: thieves, swindlers, seducers and homosexuals. In the second act they are brought to justice and it is the ridiculous miscarriage of Justice that forms the main theme of the play. The author's most withering satire is here. Some of the lines have an ironic sting.

"Would you assert that you are irresponsible?" demands the judge. "Were you ever in an insane asylum?" "No," replies Gustav. "But I did my military service..."

*Les Criminels* reflects post-War Germany in a pessimistic mood. It is morbid and repellent, but it is not without grim humor. The production—a difficult task—is the best that Pitoeff has given us in a long time. As Gustav, he is slyly amusing. Mme Pitoeff, always human as the cook, lacks the physical strength that would make the murder impressive. The supporting company is feeble.

*Carine* is the latest opus by Fernand Crommelynck, author of *Le Cocu Magnifique*, that extravagant farce which set the town talking several years ago. Presented at *L'Œuvre*, it is lauded to the skies by some and jeered at by others. A group of authors signed a manifesto declaring it was a noble and important work. That is a matter of opinion. To my mind it is over-burdened with metaphor and



contains most of the frenzied faults of *Le Cocu Magnifique*. But it deals with a saner subject.

*Carine, ou la Jeune Fille folle de son Ame*, as it is pretentiously called, shows a pure and sensitive soul faced with the ugly and vicious side of life. She marries Frederic, whom she has loved for five years, and immediately discovers that all her friends are immoral and that her mother has a lover whom she adores to the point of assisting him to seduce Carine herself. From such depravity she flies to Frederic, only to learn that during their engagement he had been carrying on an intrigue with one of her school mates. This is too much for the young girl "infatuated with her soul." She commits suicide.

That she could grow up in such a set and retain her innocence does not speak well for her intelligence. The author heaps ignominy on her *entourage ad-nauseam*. But he fails to move us, save to spasmodic mirth. Intellectually he offers nothing new and his literary style is irritating. The most beautiful things are ever the simplest and M. Crommelynck is laboriously artificial.

Mme Anne-Marie Tellier, tormented and neurotic, did not suggest the pure, pathetic maid of unsmirched ideals, albeit she acts with dignity and restraint. Lagrénée and Suzet Mais are as stilted as their lines.

To inaugurate his artistic management of the *Theatre Pigalle*, Gaston Baty revived H. R. Lenormand's play *Le Simoun* with which he and Gemier had opened the *Comédie Molière* in 1920. It is, with *Les Ratés*, Lenormand's masterpiece. *Le Simoun* is a tragedy of the mind. Laurency's obsession is a thousand times more terrible

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than Hamlet's, yet Lenormand has handled the dangerous incest theme with delicacy.

The amazing resemblance to his faithless wife which Laurency finds in his daughter, when she joins him in Africa after years of separation, turns his love for her into something more than paternal affection. His weary, fever-stricken mind is unable to thrust the nightmare from him. His unquenchable passion for his dead wife is rekindled at sight of the daughter, and only when she is killed by his jealous half-caste mistress does he experience a dreadful relief. Behind the drama of the man fighting his thoughts, there is the slow, undermining influence of the desert. Lenormand paints a picture of life in the colonies and the interludes with the old Arab philosopher lift the play far above other African dramas. An admirable scene occurs when Laurency comes to the hut of a colleague, to confess his torment, "as the most hardened unbeliever will go to a priest, simply so as not to be alone with his secret."

Gemier repeats his magnificent performance as Laurency. In the last act, when the Simoun is howling and he meets his daughter groping in the dark and mistakes her for his dead wife, his horror and despair are unforgettable. He lifts the play to the region of Greek tragedy. Germaine Dermoz is vindictive and voluptuous as the half-caste mistress; a splendid and tempestuous animal. Marguerite Jamois is a rather melancholy and tender Clothilde.

Gaston Baty employs the same methods of staging as before, but with the superior lighting plant at his disposal he has secured some magical effects. Especially beautiful is the night scene on the roof of Laurency's house, with the ghostly Arab village under the stars.